

Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 01

Ji Clan of Swallow Mountain

I Eat Tomatoes

(我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller... than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: The Land of the Dead

“Walk faster!”

“You’ve already died and become a ghost. Faster!”

“You are a prince? You ruled over tens of millions of citizens and thirty thousand armored horsemen? In the Netherworld Kingdom, you human princes are nothing!”

Smack!

Smack!

A tall, powerful-looking demonic soldier, his face mean and vicious, snarled angrily as he lashed out with his whip repeatedly. The whip flashed like lightning, striking on the bodies of the souls of the dead. He struck the ghost who had been arrogantly proclaiming that he was a prince several dozen times, only stopping when the ghost’s soul had almost dissipated.

“I should’ve died. So that means...this is the Netherworld Kingdom?” Ji Ning appeared out of nowhere. He couldn’t help but stare with curiosity at the unfamiliar surroundings. When he heard the arrogant boastings of the prince, Ji Ning couldn’t help but feel suspicious; “Ten million citizens? Thirty thousand armored horsemen? In the modern Earth, where would one find thirty thousand armored horsemen?”

“Faster!” The massive, glowing minotaur demonic soldier stared at Ji Ning and brayed.

Ji Ning followed the rest of the regiment.

Countless men in white clothes formed into a line, like a long, sinuous dragon, as they slowly moved forwards. At the end of each line, more people in white would suddenly appear. Some of these white-dressed people would shake their heads and sigh. Some would weep. Some would brag and curse. Some would stare in astonishment.

“My father is the Devil King of the Great Snowy Mountain. How dare you strike me! I’ll eat you! Grrr!”

“Stop hitting me!”

“Ah!”

The ghosts who had just reached the Netherworld Kingdom didn't know they were dead. Many of them were roaring in anger as they were beaten, but quickly, they were beaten to the point of understanding...that they were dead. No matter how glorious they had been in the past, in death, they now had nothing.

....

Time passed quickly. Ji Ning walked for a very long time in that endless line of ghosts. He didn't dare to say anything. If he spoke, he might be whipped by that minotaur. He had walked in a daze for a long time already. Fortunately, ghosts didn't get hungry or thirsty.

One day, after a long, long period of dazed walking.

“Ji Ning!” A thunderous sound seemed to echo in the world. The countless ghosts all raised their heads to stare at the sky. Ji Ning stared at the sky as well. From the horizon, an enormous black cloud began to roll over, and atop that cloud was an enormous minotaur god who was glowing with black light.

This enormous minotaur god was over a hundred thousand meters tall. He was like a massive mountain. The black cloud he was on quickly flew over from the horizon.

“Ji Ning.” Atop the massive black cloud, the minotaur god stared downwards, his eyes shooting out twin lofty golden rays of light, covering the entire area below and illuminating the body of Ji Ning, who stood there like an idiot.

The glowing light from the eyes of the minotaur god wrapped around Ji Ning's body, and Ji Ning disappeared from within the ranks of the ghosts. Those ordinary minotaur soldiers were all silent, none daring to make a sound. All of the ghosts were in a state of shock. Only a long time later did they recover.

.....

Within the boundless black clouds, the titanic minotaur god stood.

He stretched out his stand, and on top of his palm was a tiny little dot. Ji Ning.

Ji Ning was totally shocked.

God.

An enormous minotaur god was standing in front of him, and he was standing on its palm?

“Ji Ning.” The minotaur god peered down at the tiny little speck in his hands.

“I have come at the orders of the Lord of Cui Palace to come receive you.” The minotaur god spoke to the tiny speck in his hands, and then with a wave of his hands, Ji Ning was placed into an empty void area. The minotaur god then rose his black cloud and quickly disappeared into the horizon.

.....

In the Fengdu City of the Ghost World.

Within a quiet study, there was a bookshelf and a table next to it. A blue robed man in his middle years was flipping through a book.

Ji Ning stood there in front of him.

“Why does the Lord of Cui Palace wish to see me?” Ji Ning was wondering. He had no idea who this Lord of Cui Palace was and had never met him. He was just an ordinary person. How could he possibly know any Immortals? If he had a powerful background, then he wouldn’t have been tormented by his illness his entire life. So why had that Lord of Cui Palace sent the minotaur god to bring him here?

“He summoned me, but then he doesn’t speak to me.” Ji Ning sneaked a glance around the room.

The study was very simple. The only decoration was a single painting.

“That’s...” Ji Ning looked at it carefully. This was the painting of a girl.

Her feathered clothes were filled with natural grace, and the smile on her lips was even more enigmatic than those on the Buddhas in the temples on Earth. In the blink of an eye, Ji Ning became enamored with studying that painting. The woman in this painting, in terms of appearance or hair or clothing, was extremely alluring.

“Oh?” The blue robed man raised his head and glanced at him, glancing at the painting in surprise. “I didn’t expect that he would have such powers of perception.”

“Wake up!” The blue robed man shouted quietly.

The world of vacant pondering which Ji Ning had been in just now was totally shattered, and he was totally woken up. Only now did he remember that he was in the Lord of Cui Palace’s place.

The Lord of Cui Palace had closed his book and was looking at him. Ji Ning’s expression instantly changed. This was because from his current position, he could see the words within the hands of the Lord of Cui Palace: “Book of Life and Death.”

The Lord of Cui Palace was reading the Book of Life and Death?

“I’ve just been reading about your life.” The Lord of Cui Palace smiled towards Ji Ning.

Ji Ning was startled.

His life?

His previous life appeared in his mind like a dream. His father was a leading researcher in a bioscience program. His salary was extremely high. His mother was an ordinary teacher. His life should’ve been great since he had been born into such a family, but unfortunately, he suffered from constant diseases. The doctors all said that it would be a miracle if he would live to fifteen or sixteen.

Therefore, he couldn’t go to school, nor could he play around with his peers. Every day, just by walking for half an hour, he would feel exhausted. His weak body, constantly tormented by illness, caused his childhood to be very lonely. He had heard long ago in the hospital that others were

discussing how he should die in his teens. This sort of terrifying feeling of knowing your death was coming soon had tormented his childhood, causing him to be even more of a loner.

Fortunately!

Fortunately, he had his books and the internet.

The books and the internet gave him a 'mental world' which allowed him to avoid the fate of having a twisted personality. Through books and the internet, he ravenously acquired knowledge about the world, and his heart slowly grew calm, making him more rational in the way he viewed the world.

He knew that in the world, there were children who were even worse off than him. After all, he still had his parents and he had enough to eat.

He was searching for his value in life. He couldn't just stay here and wait to die, right? While he was alive, he had to do something. And thus, he had asked for a hundred thousand Chinese dollars from his parents and began to do business online. He originally had wanted to make his life more interesting, but unexpectedly, he really had incredible achievements.

After many years, he had earned an enormous fortune.

But despite that, his illness constantly reminded him that he wouldn't be able to live for much longer. As his parents didn't need him to support them, he felt that leaving the money there would be a waste. Thus, before dying, he handed out all of his money, giving it to the poor and sick children throughout the country.

"I can't change my own destiny, but I can change the destiny of those countless poor, sick children!"

This was the deepest desire in Ji Ning's heart!

After handing out all of his money, he hadn't expected that one day, while he was taking a walk in the streets outside the hospital with his parents, he had simply died.

"Your life was bitter since you were born." The Lord of Cui Palace said

softly. “But bitterness didn’t twist you. Instead, it spurred you on to astonishing accomplishments. You not only made a huge sum of money, but more importantly...you gave it all away!”

“Eighteen years of age. Dead.” The Lord of Cui Palace sighed. “For one to be willing to sacrifice one’s self to rescue a stranger is quite rare.”

Ji Ning said, “Palace Lord, you praise me too much. If I had lived a long life, I might not have been willing to do this. According to the doctors, at most I would’ve lived another three months. For me to trade those three months of life to allow a little girl to gain dozens of years in her life was worth it!”

The Lord of Cui Palace laughed, and then casually flipped open the Book of Life and Death. His gentle voice carried an infinite majesty. “Ji Ning, in your life, you saved over ten thousand people. Your merits are great. For your reincarnation, you shall be reborn into...the Deva Realm!”

“The Deva Realm.” Ji Ning murmured quietly.

The Lord of Cui Palace sighed, “Only those who accumulate great karmic merit can enter the Heaven Realm. On Earth, it is very hard for one to reach this level. Knowingly or unknowingly, by giving up your vast fortune and helping all of those children, you accumulated enormous karmic merit. Otherwise, you probably wouldn’t be able to enter the Heaven Realm.”

“Palace Lord, what do you mean?” Ji Ning was confused.

“People are born pure and without malice.” The Lord of Cui Palace said. “Children are totally pure, but later on, the vagaries of life cause them to change...if you were to have helped adults, you might’ve helped some kind people, but it is hard to say who is kind and who is evil. If you had helped evil people, it would’ve reduced your karmic merit.”

Ji Ning now realized what he meant.

“The Book of Life and Death had preordained that you would only live to be sixteen. However, because of your accumulated merits, you were allowed to live until age eighteen.” The Lord of Cui Palace sighed.

“What?” Ji Ning was shocked. “Are you saying that the fates contained within the Book of Life and Death can be changed?”

“Of course they can be changed. Why can’t they be changed?” The Lord of Cui Palace laughed. “For me, adding a hundred years to a person’s life is nothing. Even if Heaven wanted you to die, it would still give you a chance, much less the Book of Life and Death. A person’s destiny is preordained, true, but it can be changed later on.”

Ji Ning now understood.

It was true.

The ancients said, “If Heaven commits a sinful act, one can go against it; but if you do a sinful act, then you will not be allowed to live.” If Heaven wanted you to die, it would still give you a chance at life. The Book of Life and Death was nothing more than preordained destiny, which one could try and change afterwards.

“I believe there are many people who accumulated great merit. Palace Lord, why did you summon me alone?” Ji Ning asked, puzzled.

The Lord of Cui Palace laughed. “Because...you and I are from the same hometown.”

“From the same hometown?” Ji Ning was stunned. “Are you also from...”

“Right. According to the words you ‘modern’ people use, I’m also from Earth!” The Lord of Cui Palace laughed. “But that was back in the era of the Sui and Tang dynasties.”

The Sui and Tang dynasties?

Ji Ning was extremely excited. “I heard those ghosts say that they were ‘princes’ or ‘devil kings’. None of them are from Earth.”

“It is normal from them to not be from Earth. In the infinite universe of space-time, there are three realms; the Heaven, the Netherworld, and the Mortal Realms.” The Lord of Cui Palace explained. “Heaven refers to the Heaven Realm! The Netherworld refers to the underworld, the Netherworld Kingdom! Mortal, refers to the Mortal Realm. In the Mortal

Realm, there are over three thousand major worlds and trillions of lesser worlds...the three thousand major worlds are all extremely vast, and have Immortals and Devils hidden within them. As for the trillions of lesser worlds, all of them are much smaller and have much lower populations. Our hometown, the Earth, is one of those lesser worlds. Up until now, there are still only a couple billion people.”

“Every moment, in those three thousand major worlds and trillions of lesser worlds, there are countless deaths, and the spirits all come here to the Netherworld Kingdom! Tell me, how many ghosts does the Netherworld Kingdom have?” The Lord of Cui Palace looked at Ji Ning.

Ji Ning was shocked.

My God!

Three Realms?

The Mortal Realm was enormous. The Earth was just one of a trillion lesser worlds. As a human of Earth, in the past, he always thought the Earth was the center of the universe! But now, he realized...that the Earth was just one of a trillion lesser worlds, and couldn't even be considered one of the three thousand major worlds. In an instant, he had a sense of loss and disorientation.

“Three thousand major worlds, a trillion lesser worlds. Of course there's many people who have high merit. But it is rare that there is someone from my hometown who has accumulated such high merit, and what's more, your preordained fate was a short life. For you to be able to reach such a level despite that is very rare! I just happened to have some free time, so I wanted to meet you, my fellow Earth man.” The Lord of Cui Palace. “You are going to reincarnate soon. Let me tell you about the Six Realms of Reincarnation.”

“The Six Realms of Reincarnation refers to the Deva Realm, the Asura Realm, the Human Realm, the Animal Realm, the Preta Ghost Realm, and the Hell Realm.”

The Lord of Cui Palace explained, “Those who are born into the Deva Realm and the Asura Realm are all considered to be in the ‘Heaven

Realm’.”

“The Human Realm and the Animal Realm are part of the Mortal Realm.”

“The Preta Ghost Realm and the Hell Realm are in the Netherworld Kingdom Realm.”

“The Heaven Realm is the place where you are about to be reborn in.” These words immediately caused Ji Ning to grow alert. The Lord of Cui Palace sighed, “This is the best place to be. When you are reborn into the Heaven Realm, nature itself will give birth to you as a Deva! Only someone who is born naturally by the heavens can be described as a ‘immaculate lifeform’.”

“Born by nature? Not by a mother?” Ji Ning was absolutely shocked.

“Of course.” The Lord of Cui Palace laughed. “Otherwise, how could you be considered an ‘immaculate lifeform’? Strictly speaking, the heavens and the earth will be your parents!”

“After being born into the Deva Realm, you will train at an astonishing pace. You will easily be able to enter the Celestial Court and become a soldier or a general of Heaven.” The Lord of Cui Palace sighed emotionally.

Ji Ning rubbed his eyes.

A soldier or general of Heaven?

He was going to become a soldier or general of Heaven?

“Devas have another advantage; once you turn sixteen, you will regain all your memories of your previous lives.” The Lord of Cui Palace sighed. “The only reason I met you this time was because you had high merit and are a fellow countryman. I didn’t expect that when you came here...you would’ve been spellbound by the painting of Nuwa, the creator of humans. Your insight and perception is indeed very high. For the sake of helping you to become a standout soldier of Heaven, I’ll give you some help.”

Ji Ning was absolutely delighted. Help him? Help him out?

“Stare at the painting of Nuwa.” The Lord of Cui Palace pointed at the painting on the wall.

Ji Ning looked at it.

So that woman in the painting was the goddess Nuwa?

“The person on this painting is the most holy and most compassionate primordial goddess, Miss Nuwa.” The face of the Lord of Cui Palace turned solemn. “Ever since Pangu died after creating the universe, only she, Miss Nuwa, has reached Pangu’s level. Miss Nuwa is capable of destroying the universe, but also capable of healing it. She can even create new life. Of the countless races, the human race is the most spiritual one, and it was created by Miss Nuwa. She has understood 84,000 truths, and without question, she is the most invincible, powerful presence in all three Realms.”

“The highest in all three Realms?” Ji Ning was stunned.

Nuwa created humans, and Nuwa repaired the world. He had long ago heard of these myths.

“This painting is used for the Visualization Technique, but there’s no way you can see the secrets hidden within it.” The Lord of Cui Palace laughed. “Although you are about to become a Deva and a heavenly warrior and will also be trained in this, let me first teach you a bit of the Visualization Technique and fulfill the karmic bonds that brought us together.”

“Thank you, Lord of Cui Palace.” Ji Ning bowed so low, he almost reached the ground.

“No need to thank me. It is nothing more than a Visualization Technique. It isn’t some sort of secret training method, or a magical technique of the Immortals or the Devils.” The Lord of Cui Palace pointed a single at Ji Ning’s forehead.

Hong!

Ji Ning felt his brain suddenly explode, and an enormous figure of Nuwa appeared in his mind.

“Wake up.” The Lord of Cui Palace looked at Ji Ning. “Remember. Often visualizing her will definitely allow you to train your soul. But of course, you are about to be reborn and you’ll need to drink Grandma Meng’s Elixir. You will temporarily lose your memory. When you turn sixteen, you will remember this Visualization Technique. But that’s enough. It will definitely be enough to let you become an outstanding figure in the army of Heaven! With this Visualization Technique, you will have a chance to train to become an Immortal. If you wish to become a Celestial Immortal, you will suffer many trials...I hope that you will succeed, and in the future, we will meet again in the Celestial Court.”

Ji Ning’s heart was filled with excitement.

The army of Heaven?

Becoming an Immortal?

He really looked forward to it all.

“Go.” The Lord of Cui Palace waved his hand.

Hua.

Ji Ning disappeared.

Chapter 2: Reincarnation

“By order of the Lord of Cui Palace, I have come to escort you to the Road to the Yellow Springs, brother.”

In mid-air, a woman dressed in purple was flying while holding Ji Ning by his hand.

Ji Ning stared around him.

Just a moment ago, he had been in the palace of the Lord of Cui Palace. How did he suddenly appear in mid-air?

“Dare I ask, who exactly is the Lord of Cui Palace?” Ji Ning was puzzled. “I heard that before reincarnating, I should meet with the Judges of the Dead, who would investigate my past and present lives, then send me to be reincarnated?”

“Didn’t you already see a Judge?” The violet clothed woman laughed. “As the Custodian of the Book of Life and Death, naturally the Lord of Cui Palace is the First Judge of the Dead! Since he personally came to judge you, of course the other common judges don’t need to come judge you.”

In the Netherworld Kingdom, the highest authority was that of the Yamas of the Ten Halls, the ten Kings of Hell. Immediately beneath them was the First Judge of the Dead, the Lord of Cui Palace, ‘Cui Jue’.

His great fame had long since spread throughout the three Realms.

The Mortal Realm was vast beyond compare. It had three thousand major worlds and trillions of lesser worlds. Every single living creature, before they were born, would have their good deeds and evil deeds assessed by the Judges. What an enormous task this was! Thus, the entire Netherworld Kingdom had trillions of Judges who were responsible for judging the dead souls of the trillions of worlds. But Cui Jue was the leader of all of the Judges, and was titled the First Judge. He was the true Custodian of the Book of Life and Death. His power was so great that he was virtually on the same level as the Ten Kings of Hell.

“Look. The Road to the Yellow Springs.” The woman pointed to a vast

road ahead of them, which had countless ghosts slowly trudging along in a line. “If you follow the road, you will quickly arrive at the Bridge of Despair. After you pass the Bridge of Despair and drink Grandma Meng’s Elixir of Forgetfulness, you can go be reborn.”

“Go.”

The woman waved her hand.

Ji Ning’s body was suddenly surrounded by golden light, which sent him flying straight down into the front of the line, allowing him to ‘cut in line’.

The minotaur soldiers next to the line, upon seeing the violet clothed woman high up in the air, didn’t dare to say a word. They even arranged for one of the minotaur soldiers to escort Ji Ning and were extremely courteous to him.

.....

The Yellow Springs Road was full of mist. Countless souls were making their way through it, and Ji Ning was one of them.

“What’s that?” Ji Ning stared in front.

In front of him, the mist was very thick. Any souls that entered there disappeared and never came back.

“Go on. In front is the Bridge of Despair.” The nearby minotaur soldier said amiably.

Ji Ning nodded. Not hesitating, he stepped forward, entering that dense fog.

He suddenly felt as though spacetime had changed.

“Where is this?” Ji Ning stared at his surroundings in confusion. In front of him was a small, winding road. Ghostly forms could be hazily made out. In front of him, only a few dozen ghosts could be seen. In front of this little road was a river with rapid, turbid water.

“That should be the legendary Bridge of Despair.” Ji Ning headed forward.

“How strange.”

“Clearly, countless people entered here. But how come after I stepped in, so few people can be seen?” Ji Ning was quite baffled.

How could he know that here at the Bridge of Despair, time flowed differently than in the outside world.

As the saying goes, ‘For each day that passes in Heaven, a year passes in the mortal world.’

Time passed here at the Bridge of Despair at an even more extravagantly fast pace. A single day in the Netherworld Kingdom would equal countless years here in the Bridge of Despair.

“Ah! Ah!”

“I’m sorry!”

As Ji Ning walked onto the Bridge of Despair, he saw that the other side of the bridge had a pool of blood. The pool of blood had all sorts of poisonous bugs, poisonous snakes, and vicious dogs that wildly bit at people. Most of the ghosts simply walked past the pool of blood, but some fell straight into it. Clearly, these people were burdened by great sins, and found it impossible to avoid the terrifying pool of blood.

“If you knew what would happen today, would you have acted so previously?” Ji Ning shook his head, then stared at the other side. “So beautiful.”

Next to the River of Forgetfulness was countless beautiful flowers.

Not too far from the bridge was a precious gem which flashed the light, creating many different images. This was the legendary ‘Gem of Three Lives’, referring to the ‘previous life’, the ‘current life’, and the ‘next life’.

Not too far away from the Gem of Three Lives was a stone dais. This was the ‘Dais of Viewing Home’. After the souls passed the dais, they arrived at Grandma Meng.

Grandma Meng was a seemingly very ordinary old grandmother. She held a bowl of water in her hands, handing it over to each soul to allow

them to drink from it. After drinking it, the souls would become sluggish and seem to be in a trance, as they automatically began to walk towards one of the six tunnels of rebirth behind Grandma Meng.

“Deva. Asura. Mortal. Animal. Preta Ghost. Hell.” Ji Ning stared at the infathomably deep tunnels behind Grandma Meng.

“I won’t drink, I won’t drink, I don’t want to forget, I don’t want to forget...”

Many ghosts struggled.

But no matter how much they struggled, they were forced by an invisible, inexorable force to move forwards. When they arrived next to Grandma Meng, they were forced by the invisible force to drink Grandma Meng’s Elixir. No matter how they screamed or howled, they still drank it...and after drinking it, no matter how strong their emotions were or how deep their memories were, they forgot it all. By then, they were no longer themselves.

“I’m entering the Deva Realm. Although I’ll recover my memories at age sixteen, but by then, will my memories of the sixteen years of life in the Deva Realm will take precedence, or would the memories of my previous life take precedence? By then, would I still be me?” Ji Ning felt a hint of grief.

He understood.

In this life, he only lived eighteen years. In the Deva Realm, during those sixteen years, he would be far more powerful than in this life. Most likely, his current memories would be secondary.

“But what can I do?” Ji Ning was already bound, and he moved forward under that force’s control.

The ghosts ahead of him all drank from Grandma Meng’s Elixir. In six more ghosts, it would be his turn.

“Grandma Meng’s Elixir.” Ji Ning stared at Grandma Meng.

Grandma Meng suddenly raised her head.

This was the first time Ji Ning had seen Grandma Meng raise her head. Grandma Meng stared far away into the skies, and then her ancient voice said in fury, “Impudent!”

Hong!

The skies seemed to shatter and the earth seemed to break. The surrounding skies suddenly began to fracture, and the surrounding mist began to break down and dissipate, exposing the countless ghosts in line in the outside world. The fractures in space transformed a large number of ghosts into dust. Like bubbles that were popping, countless souls began to disappear, all of them screaming in misery.

“Hong!” “Hong!” “Hong!” “Hong!” “Hong!” In mid-air, countless black dragons could be seen flying about, each one of them seeing as enormous as a massive, sinuous mountain chain. Ji Ning seemed to be able to see even those heart-freezing dragon scales. The countless dragons were wandering about, having fun in the skies, and then each of the black dragons vomited forth multiple streams of black lightning. Instantly, trillions of bolts of black lightning slashed down, every single one of them causing the heavens and the earth to break apart.

“The Life and Death Formation of the Calamity Dragons? How is it that you dare to attack the Six Paths of Reincarnation? This is a grave sin!” Grandma Meng shouted with unbridled fury. Transforming into a beam of light, she flew towards the tens of millions of black dragons in the sky. Instantly, those countless black dragons surrounded Grandma Meng.

Honglonglong...

The world was fracturing, and the muddied waters of the River of Forgetfulness began to form waves. Any ghosts that touched those waters were instantly dissipated. The Bridge of Despair shattered, and the ghosts atop the Bridge of Despair fell directly into the River of Forgetfulness. As for the Six Paths of Reincarnation, those immeasurably deep tunnels were beginning to shake as well, and light was gleaming from within their depths.

“Uh oh.” Ji Ning stared in terror at the calamity he was witnessing. At

the same time, he could sense that invisible binding force dissipate.

“I’ll risk it!” When the binding force dissipated, Ji Ning was both surprised and pleased. Half hopping, half-flying, he jumped directly towards the ‘Mortal Realm’ tunnel. The Six Paths of Reincarnation each were located in different places. Because most people entered the Mortal Realm, the Mortal Realm’s tunnel was directly behind Grandma Meng and was the closest one to Ji Ning. Naturally, Ji Ning chose to jump down into that tunnel.

The surrounding ghosts were all jumping down into the various reincarnation tunnels.

One ghost dared to try and rush towards the most distant, Deva Realm tunnel.

Hong...

A bolt of black lightning struck down. That ghost, who hadn’t managed to dodge in time, instantly dissipated, along with several other nearby ghosts.

.....

What exactly had happened in the Netherworld Kingdom? Those countless black dragons that had been circling about in the air, those trillions of black lightning bolts that had wildly struck downwards...that terrifying scene had shocked Ji Ning. But he understood that as an ordinary ghost, there was no point in worrying too much about it. In addition, right now, he didn’t have any time to worry about it, because his head hurt!

Ji Ning sensed that his head was in tremendous pain, as though something was frantically grabbing onto and tearing at it.

His neck hurt, and his body was suffering tremendous pressure.

Hua!

Suddenly, he felt at ease, and then, he felt a bone-piercing cold. At the same time, a breath of fresh air entered his mouth. This was the first

‘breath’ which Ji Ning had taken since dying.

“Wow!” After taking a deep breath, Ji Ning immediately let out a cry.

The cry of an infant.

“A son! It’s a son!” Although his hearing was a bit distorted, he could still understand what was just said.

“Oh. I’ve been reborn.” Ji Ning instantly understood.

Chapter 3: Birth

Ji Ning opened his eyes and saw that he was being held by a giant who wore a set of white fur clothes. Ji Ning instantly understood that this person was a 'giant', only because right now, he was an infant being held by this man.

"You can leave now." The man said.

"Yes." The three maids said respectfully.

The man holding Ji Ning in his arms should be his father. Although he had just gotten a son, he still seemed like a piece of glacial ice, very hard to get close to. He wore a set of beautiful fur clothes, while those three maids also were dressed in animal fur. Clearly, they were of much poorer quality.

The room was quite empty. The wall, the dresser, the seats, the bed, all of them were carved from marble. The carvings were quite exquisite and gave off an ancient, beautiful nobility. Atop the bed was a six or seven meter long enormous beast fur, with the fur hanging down to the floor. At a glance, one could tell that this fur was no doubt extremely expensive. Atop that bed, there was a red-faced young woman.<!--more-->

"Even the chairs and the dressers were carved from marble. The room itself should be made from marble as well. Father and those three women are all dressed in animal fur. It seems this world doesn't have a high level of civilization." Ji Ning secretly said to himself.

"Son." Despite holding his infant son in his arms, that man still seemed very cold, without a hint of a smile on his face. Only, his eyes betrayed his excitement.

Ji Ning suddenly had the feeling that a mysterious cold energy entered his body. It was very comfortable, and then, quickly, it passed away.

"Ishwin, how is my son doing?" The woman on the bed hurriedly asked.

"As expected, his body's quality is ordinary." Ji Ishwin said softly.

The woman on the bed had faint tears in her eyes. "Let me hold him."

The man carried the child over in his arms.

“Be good.” The young woman looked at the infant, her eyes filled with love. “Ishwin, our child was injured in the womb. Although he ate those natural treasures, it only repaired some of the damage. We haven’t done right by our child.”

He had been injured in the womb?

Natural treasures?

It seemed as though his parents in this world weren’t ordinary people.

.....

Despite having just given birth to a child, his mother had easily been able to get off the bed. She was also dressed in a white fur, and was in her husband’s arms as they walked out of the room.

“You can clean up in here.” His father, Ji Ishwin, said to those three maids.

“Yes.” The three maids said respectfully.

Outside the door, on the hallway, there was a big, snow white dog. Its fur was as long as cotton, and it appeared very docile. When its gaze fell upon Ji Ning, it was filled with excitement and love.

In the wide courtyard outside the room was a giant, pitch-black coiling python which was lining the outside of the courtyard. It had circled around in multiple loops, and its head was raised to a height of dozens of meters. Its body was covered with dark, heart-stoppingly cold scales. The giant python slowly lowered its head and drew near.

“Good God!” Ji Ning was frightened. That snow white dog was fine. He had seen plenty of dogs in the past. That snow white one was just a bit bigger.

But this coiled, enormous monstrosity? Was it even a snake?

Coiled around in endless circles, and its raised head alone was dozens of meters high. The entire thing had to be two or three hundred meters long. Such an awe-inspiring beast was actually in front of his own family’s

house? This...this was simply...

“Son.” Ji Ishwin didn’t pay any attention to his son’s feelings, or perhaps in this world, people were used to these things already and didn’t feel they were strange. Ji Ishwin pointed at the snow white massive dog in front of them. “This is your Uncle White. He is your father’s lifelong friend, and he’s saved your life. You must treat him as you would treat me.”

The snow white hound looked lovingly at Ji Ning. Ji Ning could almost physically feel the deep love which the snow white hound bore him.

However...

He had to call a dog, ‘Uncle White’?

“Ishwin, the child was just born and doesn’t understand anything yet. Is there a point to telling him these things?” The young woman said while holding the child.

“Even if he doesn’t understand, this is his first time meeting with Little White.” Ji Ishwin raised his head to stare at the massive python. “Brother Black!”

Hiss...

This enormous black python which definitely would’ve made countless nations go insane suddenly transformed into a black mist, and then reformed into a black-haired middle-aged man. The black haired man smiled towards the infant. “Ishwin, I still remember how when you first showed your budding talent, I agreed to follow you. I didn’t expect that in the blink of an eye, you would have a son. Child, don’t be afraid. I am your Uncle Black.”

“Let’s go outside.” Ji Ishwin said. “Grandpa and the others are outside waiting as well. Brother Black, it’s best if you return to your regular form. I know it is very uncomfortable for you to be in human form.”

Hiss...

The black haired man nodded, and then he once more transformed into a black fog which quickly returned to that massive, coiled black python.

The massive black python immediately slithered towards the outside. Its enormous body moved very quickly. Slither, slither, slither. It easily passed the walls and disappeared.

Ji Ning felt that he was still in a state of shock.

Although this might be normal to people of this world, to Ji Ning, a man from the Earth, this was simply too stunning. A 200-300 meter long black python had suddenly transformed into a black haired man, and had said that he was his 'Uncle Black'?

Monster!

"Can it be that the snow white hound is also a monster?" Ji Ning had the feeling that this world was more amazing than he could imagine.

Husband and wife held the child together as they walked out into the corridor, while by their side was the snow white dog. Once they reached the end of the corridor, they walked onto a stone paved road which led to a garden. Within the garden, there was a thick layer of snow. Many black armored guards were standing there unmoving, while in the center, there were several dozen people standing. These several dozen people all possessed all sorts of miraculous bizarre beasts, venomous pests, and flying beasts.

Ji Ning instantly understood. It wasn't that his father was special. It was that the people of this world all raised strange beasts. Taming them was a common habit.

"It seems in the future, I'll have to get used to making friends with monsters." Ji Ning quickly adjusted to this new reality and began to observe those several dozen people. These several dozen people all seemed ferocious as tigers or panthers. Virtually all of them were dressed in beautifully cut animal furs. Only the three women were dressed in silk or cloth garments.

This secretly startled Ji Ning.

It seemed that not everyone in this world wore animal furs. Silk and cloth already existed here. Judging from the location where the three

women were standing, they were of fairly common rank within those dozens of people. Clearly, the quality of those silk or cloth clothes weren't any higher than the lavish, exquisitely cut animal furs.

The silver-haired old man standing in front walked over. "Come, Ishwin. Let me hold the child."

"Grandfather." Ji Ishwin nodded, then took the child over from his wife's arms and delivered him to the old man.

"This child truly is beautiful." The silver-haired old man's face was filled with joy. He said in praise, "Ishwin, now that you have a son, I will no longer worry as much. I've been the lord of our prefecture for already eighty years. According to the rules of our clan, a person can only be a Prefecture Lord for no more than a century. I only have twenty years left as Prefecture Lord. Previously, I wanted you to succeed me in the position of the Prefecture Lord of the West Prefecture of our Ji clan, but you insisted on focusing on walking the path of the Immortals. Now that you have a son, as I see it, in the future, he can be the next Prefecture Lord."

The next Prefecture Lord?

Ji Ning was surprised. It seemed as though his status was quite high, and this clan should be a special one as well. Those extremely obedient female servants and those unmoving, black armored guards all were a testament to his clan's power.

"Big brother!" A sudden angry shout.

Who would dare to be so disrespectful to the Prefecture Lord?

Ji Ning looked in the direction of the noise. He saw a red-haired old man who emanated heat walk over. The man had a eye-catching red earring in his right ear. Wait. It wasn't a red earring. It was a little red snake the size of a finger. He was actually wearing a snake in his ear?

The old man with the snake in his ear walked forward, growling, "The matter of the succession to the position of Prefecture Lord can't be so casual as this. In addition, who knows what sort of ability that little fellow would have?"

“Ishwin’s son’s ability would naturally...” The silver-haired old man was extremely confident. At the same time, a sudden surge of heat entered Ji Ning’s body, then quickly dissipated.

“Ishwin!” The silver-haired old man stared in astonishment towards the grandson he was so proud of.

How could he not be shocked.

This was the son of Ji Ishwin, famed as the ‘Raindrop Sword’. The majestic Raindrop Sword, all by himself, had exterminated countless monsters hidden in deep lakes and high mountains. The countless tribes under the control of their West Prefecture of the Ji clan all knew of the Raindrop Sword. In fact, more people knew of him than knew who the Prefecture Lord was.

As long as his child ate some precious treasures while in the womb, the infant would naturally have the finest possible growth conditions.

“Big brother.” The snake elder laughed. “It seems Ishwin’s son is quite average. How can the West Prefecture of our Ji clan, which commands so many tribes, have a weak little fellow take over the important position of Prefecture Lord? How can the people of the Ji clan possibly submit to him? How can the countless tribes be willing to submit to him?”

“Prefecture Lord. This little fellow, it seems, isn’t suited to the position of being the next Prefecture Lord.”

“The important position of Prefecture Lord cannot be so casually given away.”

Those few dozen people present were all high level members of the West Prefecture of the Ji clan. Many began to speak.

“Shut your mouth.” Ji Ishwin frowned. As he swept the area with his icy gaze, instantly, many of the clan members fell silent.

But the snake elder said angrily, “What a huge temper. This is the West Prefecture of the Ji clan! What, we can’t even talk here? Your son as the Prefecture Lord...if your son was qualified, then given the great merits you yourself have rendered to the West Prefecture of the Ji clan, we definitely

wouldn't say anything. But your son is so very average. You still wish him to be Prefecture Lord? The countless tribes under the banner of the West Prefecture of the Ji clan must fight together in territorial battles, and also must struggle against the Greater Monsters in the deep mountains and the lakes. How can a weak Prefecture Lord make the clan members willingly submit? How can he make those tribes submit? If the West Prefecture isn't awe-inspiring, then how will we struggle for power against the surrounding organizations, and how will we go to the mountains and the lakes to slay the Greater Monsters?"

"I will naturally be the one to kill the Greater Monsters of the lakes and the mountains!" Ji Ishwin's voice was cold as ice.

"You sure are tough. You live up to your reputation, Ji Ishwin. So you'll go kill all of the Greater Monsters hiding in all of the mountains and lakes by yourself? Then I, Ji Lee, will say this to you. If you can kill a hundred Greater Monsters, then I will no longer dispute with you over who will become the next Prefecture Lord of the Ji clan's West Prefecture. I'll let your son take it over." The snake elder sneered.

Ji Ishwin stared at him.

Every single Greater Monster was extremely sly and powerful. How could they be so easily killed? Even killing ten of them would be a miracle, much less a hundred.

"Enough. The child was just born and can't take all this stress." The silver-haired elder stared at them, then ordered, "Tonight, we'll hold a celebratory banquet at the Snowfall Hall. For now, everyone can leave."

"Alright."

The serpent elder was the first to respond, and he did so loudly. He immediately led more than half the people away with him, with the rest quickly returning to their own places as well, leaving this garden.

Chapter 4: Prefecture Lord

The banquet at Snowfall Palace continued into the late night. Late at night, the sky was covered with stars. Ji Ishwin and his wife took their infant back home.

“Whoah.” Ji Ning blearily opened his little eyes and saw the night sky filled with stars.

Ah.

He had fallen asleep. He had actually fallen asleep mid-way.

There had been fascinating performances, with musicians, drummers, and barefoot, fur-clad female dancers filling the hall. This was very different from Earth’s performances, but it was still very pleasing to the eye. However, he was still just an infant. Halfway through, he was simply too sleepy and thus he immediately fell asleep.

“Ishwin.” Yuchi Snow said with a hint of anger while walking in the snow. “At the banquet, why did you say that you would let our son go seize the golden sword? Don’t you know how hard that is?”

“I was able to accomplish it.” Ishwin frowned.

“You are the most powerful member of the West Prefecture of the Ji clan. You were able to do it as a youth, but in the thousand year history of the Ji clan’s West Prefecture, how many have been like you?” Snow was angry. Normally, she was very gentle, but anything which involved her son made her anxious. “And today, when the Prefecture Lord raised the question of having our son becoming the next Prefecture Lord, five overseers had agreed. Only a single additional overseer was needed. All you had to do was convince a single overseer...with six overseers in agreement, then our son would have easily been able to become the next Prefecture Lord. Why go seize the golden sword?”

Seizing the golden sword was simply too hard.

Ishwin shook his head and sighed. “You don’t understand.”

“What don’t I understand?” Snow said angrily.

“You haven’t been at the West Prefecture for a long time yet. You don’t understand the intricacies hidden within.” Ishwin explained. “The ten overseers of the West Prefecture are divided into the Prefecture Lord’s side and Ji Lee’s side. There are three centrists. If we were to draw another overseer into our orbit, the price would have been too high.”

“So what if the price is high?” Snow said unhappily.

“Yes, if we paid an enormous price, we could let our son become the Prefecture Lord.” Ishwin frowned. “But if our son is incapable, even if he is allowed to take the position of Prefecture Lord, he’ll just suffer countless miseries, unspeakable miseries. That will be a form of torment!”

Yuchi Snow was stunned.

“I don’t want my son to be miserable.” Ishwin continued slowly. “Thus, I brought up seizing the golden sword.”

“If my son possesses astonishing insight and talent and is able to strengthen rapidly, then naturally, he’ll be able to seize the golden sword. No one would say a single word of dissent if he were to take over the Prefecture Lord position after doing so.” Ishwin said. “But if my son is unable to seize the golden sword, then he can just live a life of leisure. I, Ishwin, will protect him his entire life and let him live without any cares.”

Snow seemed to have understood.

Becoming Prefecture Lord didn’t necessarily mean a life of ease. If an expert became the Prefecture Lord, then naturally, his rule would be stable. But if someone incapable took the position...even if he was forcibly installed, he would just be miserable.

“Ishwin, I was wrong to blame you.” Snow said softly.

Ishwin just lowered his head and rubbed his son’s face. “His eyes are wide open. This kid woke up long ago.”

“Right, Ishwin. What name should we give him?” Snow suddenly asked. “I asked you when I was pregnant, but you weren’t happy with any of the names. Now that he’s been born, we have to come up with a suitable name.”

“Let his name come into the world alongside him.” Ishwin said. “How could I not be careful about it? I hadn’t made up my mind in the past, but just now, I suddenly thought of a name...let’s call our son ‘Ning’, meaning ‘calm’. No matter whether his life is normal or exciting, no matter if he is weak or becomes an expert, let him maintain a calm, peaceful heart.”

“Ning?” Snow murmured. “Ji Ning. Ji Ning...”

Ji Ning?

The infant in his mother’s arms stared with wide eyes. Was this the name which the First Judge, the Lord of Cui Palace, had preordained that he would have in the Book of Life and Death? Or was it a true coincidence?

In this life, he would be named Ji Ning once again?

.....

The most powerful member of the West Prefecture of the Ji clan was the Raindrop Sword, Ji Ishwin.

The second was the ‘Tiger Demon’, Ji Lee.

Within Lee’s Prefecture.

“Congratulations and felicitations, father.” A middle-aged man with several dozen braids in his hair said. “That Ishwin was so arrogant and blind that he actually said he would have his son go seize the golden sword...the West Prefecture has been in the hands of our Ji clan for generations. Not a single person has taken the Prefecture Lord position through seizing the golden sword.”

The old man with flaming red hair and that scarlet snake in his ears slapped his hands together. “When I was young, I should’ve become the Prefecture Lord! But at that time, I was simply too much of a show-off and ended up losing to my big brother, Ji Shawn. That old bastard Shawn ended up taking the Prefecture Lord position and has been in that position for eighty years!”

“Eighty full years!”

“I’ve been waiting all this time. Every day has been a crucible.” Lee ground his teeth. “I didn’t expect that his line of descent would produce someone like Iswhin! He truly is a glorious, outstanding talent. Fortunately, fortunately, Ishwin is only interested in training to become an Immortal and doesn’t care about becoming the Prefecture Lord. Ishwin was simply too arrogant today. He actually chose such a path for his son.”

“It seems it is the will of Heaven that we take the Prefecture Lord’s position.” The middle-aged man said excitedly.

“Don’t be hasty.”

Lee shouted. “When I was young, that loss I suffered taught me...that a person can’t be too happy before one has actually succeeded! What we need to do is prepare!”

“Father, do you mean to say...” The man asked.

Lee was frowning in concentration.

Time slowly passed. The middle aged man sat off to one side, not daring to disturb him. He knew his father was thinking.

“Right!” Ji Lee suddenly said in a soft voice. “That’s what we’ll do!”

The middle-aged man looked at his father. “Father, what is your plan?”

“In order to seize the golden sword, one must defeat all of the youths of the tribes and the descendants of the Ji clan.” Lee said in a low voice. “Although there are few clan members, they are able to acquire a large amount of treasures and secret manuals, while although there are many youths in the tribes, very few will get any treasures. But despite that, in the quadrennial Golden Sword Ceremony, out of every five or six ceremonies, only once will a Ji clan member win.”

The middle-aged man nodded. “There are simply too many tribe members. There will always be an extremely talented person who emerges. However, no matter how great their talent, we won’t teach them the truly powerful arts of the Ji clan. We’ll only teach them some of the lesser arts. Although those youths of the tribes might be powerful during the Golden Sword Ceremony, after seventy or eighty years, the most

powerful exponents are those of the Ji clan.”

“What I mean to do is...” Ji Lee said in a whisper. “Select a few outstanding youths from the tribes and give them a large amount of treasures and resources and train them. Without my training, those tribal youth talents are already so powerful. Once they receive my training, they will definitely skyrocket in power and become even mightier! I refuse to believe that the son of Ishwin will be able to defeat all of them and seize the golden sword.”

“Right. Right.” The middle-aged man hurriedly nodded.

Usually, the treatment of the tribal youths and of the Ji clan members were totally different.

The Ji clan youths were of one family. Naturally, the Ji clan would treat them much better. But in dealing with the youths of the tribes, they would have to both draw them close and also control them well! But this time... he would use all of his talent to cultivate the most promising youths!

“Father, if you do this, then Ji Ishwin’s son will definitely lose.” The middle-aged man said confidently.

“Hahaha...” Lee laughed. “Remember. Plant some of our people by Ishwin’s side. I want to know how rapidly Ishwin’s son grows in power. Only knowing one’s own power and one’s opponent’s power will one gain victory!”

“Yes!” The middle-aged man’s eyes were shining.

.....

Yuchi Snow gently placed her son down atop the warm bed.

“Ning, be a good boy and sleep tight.” Snow gently kissed her son’s face, then lay down on the bed as well.

A pained look was on Ning’s face.

He wiped the corner of his lips. He had just drank breast milk. What a weird sensation.

The events of the past twenty four hours were simply too shocking, too

unbelievable. First, he had passed the Bridge of Despair, but then, just before he was to drink Grandma Meng's Elixir, a great upheaval had occurred in the Netherworld Kingdom. It was as though the world was about to shatter. He had been lucky enough to react in time and jump into the Mortal Realm's tunnel, and had been reincarnated into this world.

A snow white hound who was his 'Uncle White'?

A several hundred-meter giant black python that could raise its head up to the level of a house, and also transform into a black-haired middle aged man, who was his 'Uncle Black'?

And now, he was supposed to seize some golden sword and become some Prefecture Lord?

Hey guys, did you think about asking me how I feel about all this?

"Bah. Infants have no human rights." Ji Ning licked the milk from the corner of his lips while pondering. Still, a hint of excitement was in his eyes. "Time to train!"

The very first day he had arrived here, he had sensed that his clan was a powerful one. How could a clan capable of commanding countless tribes be ordinary? But clearly, the position of Prefecture Lord had aroused interest from all sides. That old fellow with the red snake in his ear wasn't weak either. He dared to argue against the Prefecture Lord and squabble with Ning's father.

Screw it!

Ning was still just an infant. There was no reason for him to worry about all these things. Right now, the most important thing was to train. Train in the Visualization Technique – Nuwa Painting.

The Nuwa Painting, according to the Lord of Cui Palace, was something which would allow him to be an outstanding figure, even if he had been born into the Deva Realm and had joined the Celestial Host, much less here in the Mortal Realm. In the Mortal Realm, it definitely would be the most top tier of Visualization Techniques. Such a precious technique that had been deeply engrained into his mind was the most powerful source of

support he would have in this world.

In his past life, he had been tormented by illness for eighteen years. He had been exhausted just by strolling for half an hour. He had simply had enough of that powerless sensation! The sensation of being powerless in the face of death! He had enough! Enough! Enough!!! He would take his destiny into his own hands, and that destiny was to follow the path that the Lord of Cui Palace had spoken to him of: Training to become an Immortal!

Training to become an Immortal was the only choice he would make!

Ning closed his eyes and began.

A hint of natural energy slowly began to enter Ji Ning's body. It was being attracted into his consciousness and began to strengthen his soul. But because only a tiny amount of natural energy was being absorbed, neither Ishwin nor Snow noticed at all.

The Visualization Technique was capable of absorbing natural energy?

This was simply incredible.

The reason was, this wasn't an Immortal training technique, nor was it a Immortal magic technique. If it was an Immortal training technique, it would wildly devour the surrounding natural energy. But the Visualization Technique, despite absorbing just a bit of natural energy...was already quite incredible.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Tiny threads of elemental energy constantly entered Ning's infant body.

Natural energy repeatedly entered his body and cleansed his body. Infants were born pure. Only after experiencing life would they be sullied by the dirt and grime of the world. But right now, Ning's body had very few impurities within it. With the natural energy repeatedly cleansing him, he quickly became incomparably pure, as pure as a newborn!

Chapter 5: Ji Clan

The rays of the spring sun shone down with lazy warmth.

A red-lipped, pale-faced child was standing with arms stretched out, while a fur-clad young lady was quickly and carefully helping him get dressed in his fur clothes. Another young lady was waiting next to him with a basin of water and a bowl with rough salt.

“In my past life, I was always sick and dressed myself. I didn’t expect that in this life, I would not only be perfectly healthy, I would also have servants to take care of me.” Ji Ning had been served by people since he was born. When he sometimes automatically began to dress himself out of habit, the two terrified maids, ‘Spring Grass’ and ‘Autumn Leaf’, immediately fell to their knees, trembling in absolute terror.

“Give it to me.”

Now dressed, Ning took over the black bowl of rock salt and headed outside the room. He walked to a nearby fountain, then began to use those white, tough pieces of rock salt to ‘brush his teeth’.<!--more-->

“What a disaster this era is. There are no toothbrushes. I have to use my hands to brush my teeth! And there’s no tooth paste, only rock salt!” Ning quickly finished brushing his teeth. Actually, he wasn’t sure why, but he was extremely clean ever since he was born, and he didn’t have any mouth odor. There was no need for him to brush his teeth, but his mother forced him to do it anyways.

“Gargle.” Ji Ning raised his head, then spat out a mouthful of water, then handed the basin to the nearby maid, Spring Grass.

The maid, Autumn Leaf, then offered him a blue stone bowl for washing his face. Ji Ning quickly washed his face, then wiped the water off with a cloth.

“Autumn Leaf.” Ning stared at her. “In your tribe, do you also use salt to brush your teeth?”

Although he was already four years old and had read many books of the

clan and had learned many things, he actually didn't know much about the situation inside the tribes.

"How could that be possible?" Autumn Leaf had a slightly freckled face. "Even the table salt which we use in the tribes aren't as white and as clean as this salt. How can we use it to brush our teeth? The men and women of the tribe just use water to rinse their teeth. Many will go their entire lives without brushing their teeth. And also, this sort of basin is extremely valuable and is usually used to boil soup. How can we use it to brush our teeth?"

Boil soup?

Ning rubbed his eyes. This basin could be used to boil soup?

"Let's go eat." Ning turned his head and walked away, with the two maids behind him.

...

"Father. Mother." Ning arrived in the main hall and immediately stood there and bowed.

"Mm."

His father, Ji Ishwin, was seated in front, while his mother was seated to the left. His own position was towards the right. In front of him was a black, marble table, with three big bowls on it. One contained steaming, aromatic meat, another had thick yet soft pastries, and the third was a bowl of hot water. This was his breakfast.

If this breakfast for a four year old was placed on Earth, it would probably be enough for three adults to eat. But in this world...every child could eat a tremendous amount of food. Ning was no different.

"Mmm, it tastes so good." Ning grabbed a chunk of meat from the first bowl and ate it. Despite having the taste buds of an Earth human, he still felt the food was delicious. Ning knew...because his body was physically average, ever since he was young, he had been fed special food. The meat he ate wasn't meat from ordinary beasts; it was meat from magical, monstrous beasts. In the tribes, monster meat was extremely rare and

precious, but Ning was able to eat it every single day.

It had special effects. It would make Ning stronger!

“I’m done eating!” Ning ate very fast; it could be described as simply ‘scarfing the food down’. And then, with a gurgle, he drank all the hot water as well.

“Let’s go.” Ning ran out, with Spring Grass and Autumn Leaf chasing after him.

Snow watched her son run away and laughed, “Although Ning was rather weak when he was born, that’s only because he was injured while in the womb. His potential is still very high. Look, every day, he’s able to eat so much monster meat. His body will definitely grow stronger.”

Ishwin nodded as well. Monstrous beasts weren’t like ordinary animals. Monstrous beasts absorbed the natural elemental energy of the world, and their flesh contained that energy as well. Normally, children wouldn’t be hungry for two days if they ate it for breakfast, but Ning ate it for three meals a day. Clearly, he was able to absorb it all.

.....

The two maids were carrying thick books behind Ning. Behind them were eighteen massive guards who wore scarlet red armor. The red armored guards had mysterious runes scrawled onto their armor, which faintly seemed to hum with a strange energy, causing all of them to emanate a powerful aura.

The Crimson Guards were the most powerful soldiers of the Ji clan. The West Prefecture only had a hundred Crimson Guards who listened only to the command of Ji Ishwin.

Ishwin arranged eighteen Crimson Guards to protect Ning at all times. If Ning was to ever be outside the house, the eighteen Crimson Guards would stay right by his side.

“To the training yard.” Ning’s journey was very smooth.

Nobody dared to block his path!

The city of the West Prefecture was a great and massive city. Within the city was hundreds of thousands of citizens, and there were three major areas. They were the inner city, the military camp, and the training grounds.

The inner city was where the Ji clan members of West Prefecture lived. It was the central administrative area!

The military camp was the place where the soldiers controlled by the Ji clan of West Prefecture were stationed.

The training grounds was where the youths of the Ji clan and of the many tribes controlled by the Ji clan would come to train.

The inner city and the training grounds were connected by a straight line. Ning led his servants and guards directly towards the central training grounds. The vast training plaza currently had thousands on thousands of youths there training.

“Look, it is Ji Ning!”

“The only child of the Raindrop Sword? Ji Ning?”

“Are his female slaves holding books? When those roving merchants came to my clan in the past to sell books, I heard that that the cost of each book was a thousand lambskins.”

Many of the youths in the training grounds were talking amongst themselves. There were many who had matured quickly, and thus knew that this child was the son of the number one expert of the Ji clan, Ji Ishwin, the ‘Raindrop Sword’. Many of the youths actually were quite fond of this child, because although Ji Ning came from a powerful and noble clan, he didn’t bully them at all. But no matter how fond of him they were, they wouldn’t dare tease him.

“Oof.” Ji Ning sat down on the chair, his eyes filled with excitement.

In the previous life, he was often by himself, and so now, in his heart, he really enjoyed crowded, rowdy areas.

“Give me the books.” Ning took a thick and heavy book from the hands

of Spring Grass. This tome really was thick, roughly twenty centimeters thick, and it was bound by the soft skin of some monstrous beast. In this era where slavery still existed, books were quite precious. Ning, however, could casually flip through the books in their private library and even take a few out.

After being born, Ning had primarily done two things...

The first thing was to train in according to the Visualization Technique – Nuwa’s Painting. His soul had become strong and sturdy, to the point where he now had photographic memory. Just half a month ago, he had even been able to reach the level of dividing his mind into two.

What did dividing his mind in two meant? For example, he could simultaneously use his left hand to write an essay while using his right hand to paint a painting. It was as though his consciousness had been divided into two parts which didn’t interfere with each other.

Actually, this wasn’t particularly miraculous. According to the books, those who trained in the path to become an Immortal could all use their minds to accomplish multiple things at once. They would be able to use several treasures to attack at the same time. The true brilliance of the Nuwa Painting was that Ji Ning was able to divide his mind in two after visualizing it for just two years.

The second thing he had done was to read!

Half a year after his birth, when Ning was able to form some words, he had hugged a book and pointed at what looked like some words in it and said, “This, this, this...” Spring Grass and Autumn Leaf, being personal maids, all knew how to read. Naturally, they didn’t dare to not reply. With their help and with guesswork, he soon learned how to recognize the words.

And then, his reading began!

As the saying goes, ‘spending time sharpening the knife makes the cutting go faster’. Although he was fully devoted to the idea of training to become an Immortal, Ning understood that sometimes, haste made for ineffectiveness. Reading was a way of ‘sharpening the knife’ to become an

Immortal. First of all, he needed to understand what this world was like. He would also learn more about what it meant to become an Immortal, and what types of Immortals there were, and so on and so forth.

Only after learning about this would he know what the best choice for himself would be!

After reading many books, Ning came to know that the Ji clan of West Prefecture was a small power located within the vast expanse of land ruled over by the Darcian Dynasty!

The territory ruled over by the Ji clan of West Prefecture stretched for three thousand kilometers from north to south and five thousand kilometers from east to west. There were countless tribes who lived on this land, and all of them were ruled by the Ji clan!

What's more, this was nothing more than the Ji clan of West Prefecture.

The Ji clan was an ancient clan. It was divided into the Central Prefecture, the East Prefecture, the West Prefecture, the North Prefecture, and the South Prefecture. All five Prefectures combined made up the entirety of the Ji clan!

However...the Darcian Dynasty was simply too large. Its territory was nearly limitless, and it was an ancient dynasty which was born during the 'Fiendgod Era'. Over a trillion years had passed since the terrifying Fiendgod Era. For a dynasty to be able to last a trillion years was something which Ning found to be inconceivable.

The Ji clan was nothing more than a small power within the borders of the Darcian Dynasty, but to the countless local surrounding tribes, the Ji clan was definitely their absolute rulers!

"This truly is a world where Immortals and Devils abound." Ji Ning sighed mentally. "Ordinary mortal realms find it hard for an Empire to sustain for even a thousand years, but in this ancient world, an ancient, large empire is something which is beyond my imagination.

"Right. It has been over two year since I was born, and I know very little about training to become an Immortal. It is time I begin."

He had spent a year in the womb, and when he was born, it was winter, while a new year had come soon after that. Thus, he had lived in this world for over two years now.

....

That very night.

Both sides of the main hall were filled with lit lamps, and the entire hall was extremely bright. His father continued to sit where he usually sat, with his mother on the left and Ning on the right. The table was still covered with meat as well as plates of vegetables and grains.

“Nom nom nom.” Ning blew through the meat on the table like a twister, and then raised his head up. “Father, mother!”

“Hrm, what is it?” Ishwin looked at his son, and Snow did as well.

Although their son’s intelligence caused them boundless joy, it didn’t startle them too much, because in this vast world, there were plenty of people who were devilishly clever.

“I want to train!” Ning said seriously. “I wish to train to become an Immortal!”

Seeing the serious look on her son’s face, Snow began to laugh. “Train to become an Immortal? Ishwin, our son wishes to train to become an Immortal!”

“Immortal?” Ishwin looked at his son coolly. “Do you know what training to become an Immortal means?”

Chapter 6: The Path to Immortal Training

“I don’t know. Please instruct me, father.” Ning said respectfully.

Actually, after having read so many books, Ning had learned about it long ago. But as a four year old child, there was no need for him to appear so devilishly intelligent.

“Then I will tell you and let you understand.” Ishwin’s voice was like ice. “First, let’s talk about the seven major stages.”

“The first stage, Houtian. Lifespan of a hundred years.

“The second stage, Xiantian. Lifespan of two hundred years

“The third stage, Zifu, the ‘Violet Palace’. At this level, one will be addressed as Zifu Disciple. Lifespan of five hundred years.

“The fourth stage, Wanxiang, ‘Manifestations’. At this level, one will be addressed as Wanxiang Adept. Lifespan of eight hundred years.

“The fifth stage, Primordial. Can be referred to as Primordial Master.

“The sixth stage, Void. Can be referred to as ‘Land Immortal’, or ‘Earth Immortal’. In the later levels of the Void stage, a heavenly tribulation will test them. If they fail, then they will die and their spirits will be extinguished. If a Primordial’s body is destroyed but manages to escape with his soul, then he will become a ‘Loose Immortal’, whose power is roughly on par with the ‘Earth Immortals’.

“The seventh stage, Celestial Immortal. Only at this stage can one be considered to have ascended beyond the Three Realms and no longer be formed by the Five Elements!”

Ishwin stared at Ning after speaking. He wanted to see the look of awe and surprise on his son’s face...but Ning was just listening intently.

“You say you wish to train to become an Immortal. Thus, I wish you to know how hard it is to become an Immortal.” Ji Ishwin’s voice sank down. “The first obstacle to becoming an Immortal...is to pass from the Houtian stage to the Xiantian stage!”

“What does Xiantian mean? Only a lifeform which was naturally born by the heavens and the earth can be described as a Xiantian lifeform. In the distant Fiendgod Era, there were Fiendgods that were born naturally by the heavens and by the earth and which possessed tremendous power from their birth. In addition, there are those who are reborn into the Heavenly Realms as ‘Devas’ or as ‘Asuras’. These Devas and Asuras are all birthed by nature itself, and thus by their very nature, they are a Xiantian lifeform. This makes it very fast for them to train, because only Xiantian life forms can train to become an Immortal!”

“It is impossible for mortals to train to become an Immortal...but the Heavens always leave a thread of hope. Thus, in the past, benevolent elders created a set of training techniques which can allow the bodies of ordinary people become akin to the bodies of Xiantian lifeforms. Only then did it become possible for ordinary people to train to become an Immortal.”

“But for an ordinary person to become a Xiantian lifeform is against the natural laws of the universe, making it very hard! The success rate is lower than one in ten thousand! Tell me, is it hard or not?”

Ning continued to listen.

Xiantian lifeform? If it wasn't for that huge disturbance in the Netherworld Kingdom, he probably would have already reincarnated and become a Deva in the Heavenly Realms. Naturally, that would mean he would already be a Xiantian lifeform. However, currently he was a mortal... and indeed, for a mortal to reach the Xiantian stage was an extremely difficult path.”

“The second great obstacle to becoming an Immortal...from the Xiantian stage to the Zifu stage!”

“Only by establishing a Zifu, also known as a ‘Violet Palace’, can one continue to train as an Immortal. Establishing a ‘Violet Palace’ is like laying the ‘foundation’ when building a house, or seeding the fields in order to harvest the crops. The Violet Palace is the crop field and is the core for an Immortal. It is the basic underpinning of the path of

Immortals! Only after one has truly established a 'Violet Palace' in one's body can one embark on the route to becoming an Immortal. And only then can one be titled a Zifu Disciple! For a Xiantian expert to establish a 'Violet Palace'...perhaps one in a thousand will succeed. Tell me, is it hard or not?"

Ning nodded.

Right. It was hard.

At the same time, he continued to listen carefully. The books of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture only described these two obstacles. They didn't describe the obstacles after that.

"In order to establish a Zifu and become an Immortal, one must possess a world-shaking power."

"But becoming an Immortal, by its very nature, is against the laws of the universe. Thus, starting from the day you step onto the path of the Immortals, in other words from the day on which you establish your Zifu, you will be tested every three hundred years. Every nine hundred years, you will undergo a major tribulation. Thus, as the saying goes, 'Three centuries a disaster, nine centuries a tribulation. Disasters are easy to avoid, but tribulations are hard to escape!' A test every three centuries, and a tribulation every nine...after embarking on the path to becoming an Immortal, this will continue forever, unless you become a Celestial Immortal. Otherwise, the 'Disasters Three, Tribulations Nine' will become your eternal fate."

Disasters Three, Tribulations Nine?

Three centuries a disaster, nine centuries a tribulation. Disasters are easy to avoid, but tribulations are hard to escape?

Ning truly was shocked by this. Unless one became a Celestial Immortal, everyone who trained in the path of Immortals would have to deal with a test every three centuries.

....

Ji Ishwin and Yuchi Snow looked at their son. Right now, there was a

look of shock and disbelief on their son's face. Seeing the stunned look, Ishwin nodded slightly. He had finally managed to shock the little rascal.

"Our son is still very young. Why did you tell him all those things?" Snow said unhappily.

"Mother." Ji Ning lifted his head up, a smile on his lips. "It is fine."

Ji Ishwin looked at him in surprise.

"Father." Ji Ning laughed. "From mortal to Xiantian, from Xiantian to Zifu. These two obstacles alone...are extremely difficult. The 'Disasters Three, Tribulations Nine' are very distant and very far off. I don't need to worry about them at all for now."

"Mm." Ishwin nodded. "Your attitude isn't bad. You are correct. Right now, there truly is no need for you to think about becoming a Zifu Disciple. That's too far away for you. At the vast area around Mount Swallow, the strongest people in the countless tribes and in the Ji clan are only at the Zifu Disciple level. The path of the Immortals is a hard one. Even our massive Darcian Dynasty would perhaps produce only a single Celestial Immortal in the space of a million years."

Ning nodded gently.

In the Netherworld Kingdom, the Ruler of Cui Palace had told him that the 'Nuwa Painting' would only give him a chance at becoming a Celestial Immortal, and that there were still many obstacles to overcome. And that was assuming that he was going to be a Deva and also a soldier in the armies of Heaven. From this, one could imagine how hard it was for one to become a Celestial Immortal. To escape the confines of the Three Realms and no longer be subject to the Five Elements wasn't so easily done.

"Do you still desire to train to become an Immortal?" Ishwin looked at Ning.

"Yes." Ning nodded.

Ishwin nodded slightly. If the boy had been terrified just by hearing about this, Ishwin would have been disappointed. What he didn't know was...how could Ning possibly be scared as easily as this? There was

nothing without risk. Even walking on the street, one might be killed by a rock falling down from the skies. Even when eating, one might choke to death. Training to become an Immortal naturally would be extremely risky. It would be bizarre if it wasn't.

"However..." Ishwin frowned. "You are too young, and training techniques are very complicated. If I was to transmit a high-class Immortal training technique to you and you trained in a wrong direction, it would harm your body. But ordinary Immortal techniques aren't worth learning..."

"Father." Ning said. "I wish to learn the Fiendgod Body Refining Technique."

"Oh? You know about Body Refining?" Ishwin was extremely surprised, and Snow began to laugh. "It seems our son has read quite a few books. He even knows that there are two main paths of Immortal training."

There were two primary paths of training to become an Immortal.

The first was in Ki Refining, refining ki energy! 99% of those who trained to become an Immortal chose this path. This path allowed one to use many mysterious Immortal treasures, create complicated golems, control large amounts of deadly magical beasts, develop powerful magical formations, and also use some extremely vile techniques...in a word, this was an extremely glorious and profound path.

The other path was in Body Refining.

Supposedly, the three Realms had each given birth to many Fiendgods. All of them were born from nature itself and were powerful from their birth! As for the creator of the universe, Pangu, he himself was the mightiest of them, the Fiendgod of Primal Chaos. He also possessed the most powerful body...and thus, a number of elders managed to develop this 'Fiendgod Body Refining' technique, which would allow the practitioners to possess bodies on par with Fiendgods. Indestructible bodies, possession of boundless strength, having three heads and six arms, regenerating from a single drop of blood, immortal and undying...these all belonged to the Fiendgod Body Refining method.

Reputedly, at the same level of development, a Fiendgod Body Refiner would be able to totally suppress his opponents!

“Body Refining is a hundred times more difficult than Ki Refining.” Ishwin said seriously. “The Fiendgod Body Refining method allows one to possess the power of a Fiendgod. How powerful is that? Hard, very hard...”

“Father, first I’ll train the body. Afterwards, I will develop Ki.” Ning said. “These two training methods can be simultaneously progressed in. By then, I’ll take whatever path I am most skilled in, which will be my primary path. In addition, weren’t you afraid that I am too young and that training in Ki will damage my veins? The Fiendgod Body Refining technique doesn’t have this risk.”

Ishwin and Snow glanced at each other.

It seemed their son had thought things through. Indeed, the Fiendgod Body Refining technique primarily exercised the entire body’s muscles and internal organs. As for the blood vessels? It didn’t have much to do with that at all. It must be known that Innate Fiendgods came in all types, and their veins were totally different from the veins of human beings. The benevolence of those ancestors had developed the Fiendgod Body Refining technique from the bodies of the Fiendgods. Naturally, they ignored the veins.

“Alright!” Ishwin nodded. “The Fiendgod Body Refining method is incomparably precious. Our Ji clan in total has nineteen books on Fiendgod Body Refining scattered through our five prefectures. I will let you choose the one you wish to train in!”

“Yes.” Ning was extremely excited.

“Brother Black.” Ishwin shouted towards the outside.

A black-haired middle-aged man appeared from outside. His eyes faintly glowed with red light, and his eyes were rather long. It was the human form of that massive black python.

“Uncle Black.” Ning hurriedly called out. Two years ago, when he was born, he had learned that this black haired man was a Greater Monster

who had already trained to reach the 'Xiantian lifeform' stage. Generally speaking, animals who had reached a certain level of intelligence would be called 'monsters'. After beginning to absorb the energy of nature, since they didn't possess special training techniques, it was even harder for them to train than it was for humans. Only when they broke through to become Xiantian lifeforms would they possess the ability to transform themselves!

The black-haired man smiled and nodded. "Ishwin, what do you need?"

"I'd like to trouble you to make a journey to the library." Ishwin said. "Bring the abridged versions of those nineteen training methods of the Fiendgod Body Refining techniques here. Ning wants to use them."

"Ning wants to use them?" The black-haired man looked at Ning with a laugh. "Someone who trains with the Fiendgod Body Refining would have the power of a Fiendgod. It seems Ning is quite ambitious."

Hua!

The black-haired man disappeared into thin air.

Ning took a deep breath as he waited. Uncle Black spoke the truth. He was indeed ambitious. The first reason was because he knew that due to his youth, his father probably wouldn't allow him to train in Ki Refining. Self-study? Ning didn't have the confidence. The second was that the Fiendgod Body Refining method had some very powerful benefits. To kill a Fiendgod practitioner was more than a thousand times more difficult than to kill a Ki practitioner! Fiendgod Body Refining experts, at the same level, could totally dominate a Ki Refining expert!

They had both strong self-preservation abilities and strong power. Just based on these two alone, Ning took a liking to the Fiendgod Body Refining method.

Hu!

A gentle wind appeared out of nowhere, and the black-haired man appeared in the middle of a hall, a smile on his face. "Nineteen copies of abridged versions of Fiendgod Body Refining techniques."

“Ning.” Ishwin looked at his son. “The abridged versions only have the first parts of each Immortal training technique, combined with a summary and description of the technique. Take a close look and see which one you want.”

The black-haired man placed the nineteen tomes in front of Ning.

Every single tome was very thin. After all, these were abridged versions. Even if they were stolen, they wouldn't pose a loss for the Ji clan. They couldn't possibly place precious Immortal training copies in their entirety in the library, after all. However, even these abridged versions of the Fiendgod Body Refining weren't freely available for others to see. This was why Ishwin had sent the black-haired man to make the trip.

“Nineteen tomes.”

Ning began to read in earnest.

Chapter 7: Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens

One thin abridged book after another was placed on the table, and Ning instantly began to scan the names of each of these books.

[Calamity Fiend] [Indestructible Blood Fiend] [Song of the Inferno] [Vajra Buddhist Sutras] [Freeform Soul] [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] [Eternal Mysteries of the Yellow Earth] [Spirit Fox Sutra] [Sutra of the Future Buddha] ...

Every single book was covered with ancient, strange-looking characters. Fortunately, Ning had learned these words after Ning had been born into this world.

Ning took a deep breath. This was a critical choice! One which would determine his destiny!

He picked up a book and began to read.

[Calamity Fiend]. To train it, one needed to cover one's body with magic tattoos and use hellfire to temper one's body. It was extremely painful. After covering the body with nine different types of magic tattoos and after having been tempered by hellfire 81 times, the body would totally transform and become that of a Xiantian lifeform, instantly acquiring boundless strength, the ability to belch hellfire, and immediately regrow a severed arm. This was an extremely hard yet extremely fast way of training. Theoretically, one only needed 81 days in order to reach the Xiantian level.

[Indestructible Blood Fiend]. The pain this caused was even greater than that of the [Calamity Fiend] training method. It required three years of magic tattoos, three years of a hellish, tormented existence.

[Song of the Inferno]. This required one to train next to a blazing inferno, then to be engulfed by a blazing inferno, and then finally to enter the lava of a volcano without being harmed at all. It required a person to become one with fire. Once a person could control the limitless power of

fire, the one would be considered to have reached the Xiantian level...

Reading these three, Ning began to frown.

Why was it that these Fiendgod training methods were all so painful? It was worse than torture!

“You foolish child.” Snow couldn’t help but speak out. “Only a few Fiendgod Body Refining methods are truly painful. Only five of these nineteen books are excruciating painful. The others aren’t nearly as bad. I didn’t expect that the first three you picked up...”

“Oh!” Ning let out a sigh of relief.

Ishwin, seated nearby, said coldly, “Fiendgod Body Refining is far more difficult than Ki Refining. For a mortal to become a Xiantian lifeform is against the natural law of the world. To reach that level through the most difficult method, the Fiendgod Body Refining method...of course it is hard! In addition, these methods which require miserable agony and difficulties, although they are quick, can be considered heterodox methods which cannot be considered to have a good foundation.”

Ning nodded as he continued to read.

[Vajra Buddhist Sutras]. This was a type of Buddhist Vajra training method.

[Freeform Soul]. It required an extremely long period of time to train, but after reaching the Xiantian level, it allowed one to freely transform one’s body and filled one with life. Even if one was chopped into many tiny pieces, one would quickly reform. This was one of the topmost life-preserving types of Fiendgod Body Training.

[Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens]. Without question, the number one type of Fiendgod Body Training method!

“What?!”

Ning’s eyes turned hungry, and he immediately stared at the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] and began to read carefully.

The [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] had nine parts.

The first three levels were for the Houtian stage.

The middle three levels were for Xiantian lifeforms.

The later three levels were for the Zifu stage.

“It really is different. Those other training methods, at their peak, only allowed the trainees to become peak Xiantian lifeforms. But this [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] allows a person to reach the peak Zifu level.” Ning continued to read carefully despite his excitement.

Upon reaching the Xiantian level, one would be able to control water and fire, and also possess astonishing physical strength. One’s body would be light and agile, and all six of the senses would be sharpened. Severed limbs would regrow.

Upon reaching the Zifu level, one would be able to regenerate from a single drop of blood. Upon reaching the Wanxiang stage, one would have amazing powers, such as growing three heads and six arms, the Sunchaser ability, or Shining Dragon Eyes ability. But of course, the prerequisite was that one would need to be trained in these magical powers.

Fiendgod Body Refining adepts were able to easily suppress Ki Refining adepts of the same level.

But the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] was able to suppress all other types of Fiendgod Body Refining techniques!

This was publicly knowledge!

There was no dispute!

But training in it was extremely hard, the hardest of all. This, too, was undisputed!

“That will be my choice!” After flipping through the remaining Fiendgod Body Refining books, without hesitating at all, Ning made his choice.

“[Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens]!”

“You’ve chosen?” Ishwin looked at his son.

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

Ishwin said slowly, “Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens’. This is publicly acknowledged by everyone in the world as the most powerful Fiendgod Body Refining method. It is far more profound than the likes of the ‘Song of the Inferno’, the ‘Vajra Buddhist Sutra’, or the ‘Calamity Fiend’ techniques. And that’s just at the Zifu level. The later stages of it are even more profound. If you are able to become a Zifu Disciple, it would be very easy for you to advance to higher levels as well.”

“This is the most widely spread and most easily obtainable type of Fiendgod Body Refining technique.” Ishwin looked at his son. “But it is also the hardest!”

Ning laughed.

He had spent two years here in this world reading many books. He knew that refining techniques were extremely important! The more profound the training technique, the harder it was to train in. For the higher level books regarding the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] to be easily obtainable meant that it was all the more important for him to choose this one.

“It has the greatest power! The undisputed best!”

“It is the most widespread one!”

“It is the most easily obtainable method!”

Ishwin looked at his son. “It has countless merits, and just one flaw; it is extremely difficult! There hasn’t been a single member of the Ji clan of any of our five Prefectures who managed to reach the fourth part and become a Xiantian lifeform.”

“What? Not a single member of the Ji clan in all five Prefectures has been able to use it to become a Xiantian lifeform?” Ning was shocked.

It was fine if they didn’t reach the Zifu stage.

But not even one had reached the Xiantian lifeform stage?

“Right.” Ishwin said. “Not a single one. Because it is simply too hard, far harder than you can imagine. But I must admit that it is the most

mysterious and most powerful Fiendgod Body Refining method. Even in the legends of the Fiendgods, this technique is the most powerful one!”

“Then this will be my choice!” Ning didn’t hesitate at all.

He was born into the world with the likes of the [Nuwa Painting], one of the highest class Visualization Techniques which would allow him to stand out even amongst the armies of Heaven. With such a firm foundation, how could he not at least give it a shot? Even if he failed, that wouldn’t be a big deal. He could then choose to train in another technique.

“Fine!” Ishwin revealed a rare smile on his face. He was very happy with his son’s resoluteness. “Then I will go get the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] for you.”

“Thank you, father.” Ning was filled with anticipation.

.....

Dark night.

The door to the room was closed, and inside the room, the arm-thick candles were flickering. There were only three people in the room. Ishwin, Snow, and their son, Ning.

Ning was holding an extremely thick book with scarlet red letters and reading through it. This was the legendary, most powerful of techniques: [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens].

“It really is hard.” Ning was frowning as he read it.

The [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] had several major obstacles.

The first was the introduction. In order to begin training in it, one had to be able to sense the ‘Great Yang’ (the Sun) and the ‘Great Yin’ (the Moon) in the skies. Many other Fiendgod training methods required the absorption of elemental energy, such as fire, water, or electricity in order to build up power. But the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] required its practitioners to immediately begin sensing those two greatest

of celestial bodies, and to absorb the energy of the Sun and the Moon.

Many trainees simply couldn't sense the Sun and the Moon at all. And this was just the first step!

Afterwards, by absorbing the energy of the Sun and the Moon, one's entire body would become covered with divine tattoos. This was the second part! After the Divine Sun Tattoo and the Divine Moon Tattoo were completely formed, one could be considered as having completed the first level of the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens]! Actually, from this very first level, one could tell how unimaginably profound this technique was, because many of the other techniques, such as the [Calamity Fiend] technique, all relied on physically carving the magic tattoos onto one's body.

But for the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], those tattoos would be formed naturally, and the divine tattoos were of the Moon and the Sun!

Once the first level was mastered, one was usually able to easily reach the third level without any problems.

But breaking through to the fourth level and becoming a Xiantian lifeform was even more difficult.

It required 'Yin and Yang to Fuse, Water and Fire Become One'. Only then could one break past and become a Xiantian lifeform.

The later obstacles...those were too far off. There was no need to worry about them.

"Whew." Finishing reading, Ning let out a long breath.

Ishwin and Snow looked at their son.

"Father, please instruct me with regards to the mysteries hidden within the first level of the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens]." Ning looked at his father.

"Understanding the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] is very easy." Ishwin said. "All you need to do is follow the instructions on

the pictures. There are nine pictures to the first level. It is very simple.”

Ning nodded. He had read many books in this world, and when he flipped through it, he had quickly learned what the training method was. But he was worried that he might have missed some sort of profound meaning. After all, training was something he couldn't be too rash about. Since his father had said that the instructions in this book were very clear, then it was time to start.

Ning closed his eyes and raised his fists, then bowed down...this was the first diagram: Bowing to the Sun and the Moon!

He carried out all of the movements in accordance with the pictures, seeming almost to move in accordance with a strange ritual dance, and his body carried within it a strange, ancient aura.

“Hrm?” Ishwin was surprised.

“His very first attempts at the movement are so accurate and so precise.” Snow was surprised as well. Although most people wanted to make the movements properly, they wouldn't actually be able to do so as precisely as they wished. However, Ning had been training in accordance to the [Nuwa Painting] since his birth. His soul was very powerful, and he had extremely strong control over his body as a result. Given that he had also constantly been cleansed by the energy of nature and his soul was as pure as an infants, it was quite natural that he could easily make accurate movements.

Hua!

Ning's final movement was to sit down in a kneeling position, his two arms hanging down in front of him, as though one was resting on the sun while the other was resting on the moon.

Utter silence.

Ishwin and Snow were holding their breaths as well. They knew that it was the critical movement. The earlier dancing movements were only for the purpose of allowing one to sense the 'Great Yang' (the Sun) and the 'Great Yin' (the Moon). Whether or not Ning would be able to sense those

two most exalted of stellar bodies...

Despite this just being the introductory part to the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], it had prevented countless people from training in it.

The two of them knew that the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] was the hardest Fiendgod Body Refining method to train, and they knew that the chance of their four year old son being able to master the introductory part was very low. However, parents always hoped that their children would succeed. They waited, hoping for a joyous surprise to happen...

Chapter 8: The Moon in One Hand, the Sun in the Other

Ning could feel his consciousness passing through multiple layers of the world's obstructions, constantly going forward...after passing through countless layers, he entered an infinite, endless void. Deep within that infinite void was two incomparably enormous stellar bodies.

One was an enormous stellar body which had huge plumes of raging flames dancing on its surface. It seemed like an enormous ball of flame, and it illuminated the endless void.

The other was covered with a layer of unending ice, with an enormous osmanthus tree in the middle of the ice. The stellar body's cold light also illuminated part of the world.

These two ancient stellar bodies, one was the Solar Star (the Sun), the other was the Lunar Star (the Moon).

"Too beautiful. Too incredible." Ning was absolutely stunned. He felt that he could even 'see' those enormous plumes of flame and 'see' the enormous leaves of the osmanthus tree.

Others, when training in accordance with the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], found it very hard to even hazily sense the Solar Star and the Star, but Ning could even 'see' the plumes of flame and the leaves on the osmanthus tree.

....

Within the hall.

Ishwin and Snow were watching in astonishment. They saw countless spots of starlight appear in the area around Ning. The countless spots of starlight were primarily gold and silver in color; scorching hot gold starlight and ice cold silver starlight. They swirled around Ning, not stopping in any location. Slowly, beneath Ning's left hand, a miniature star formed beneath his left hand, and on it an Osmanthus Tree could vaguely be seen. This was the Lunar Star.

And on his right hand, there formed a fiery hot miniature star that was surrounded by a flying Golden Crow. This was the Solar Star.

The Solar Star in one hand, and the Lunar Star in the other.

Surrounded by starlight, Ning's face seemed so peaceful, so pious.

"This...this..."

Ishwin and Snow looked at each other, stunned.

"The Moon in one hand and the Sun in the other?" Ishwin couldn't help but show his shock on his face, no matter how calm and collected he normally was. "The Osmanthus Tree was born on one, and the Golden Crow flies around the other?"

"The legendary, 'Moon in one hand, Sun in the other'?" Snow stared fixedly at the two miniature stellar bodies which had formed in her son's hands. "And even the Osmanthus Tree and the Golden Crow have appeared..."

The two were in a state of absolute shock. They were not ordinary people. Naturally, they knew much more than the common person, and they had personally read the contents of the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] before. They naturally knew what this scene portended. The [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] was extremely difficult to train in, and the training speed would normally be very slow.

There were several types of 'initiations' one might see.

The first type was called, 'threads of starlight'. Only two threads of starlight would slowly enter the body. This was the poorest type of initiation and guaranteed that one would be extremely slow in training.

The second type was called 'clouds of starlight'. A large amount of starlight would surround the body and form a cloud. This was quite good, actually.

The third type, was known as 'a vortex of starlight, the Moon in one hand, the Sun in the other'. Countless flecks of starlight would swirl around the body like a vortex, while the left hand would form a 'Lunar

Star', while the right hand would form a 'Solar Star'. This was the peak result. But if the two miniature stars formed to be so realistic as to even show the 'Osmanthus Tree on the Lunar Star, Golden Crow on the Solar Star', then this would be the legendary perfect result.

Actually, it wasn't strange for this result to occur.

Ning had trained using the [Nuwa Painting] Visualization Technique since he was born, a technique which even in the Deva realm would be a top class technique. He was even capable of dividing his mind. One could imagine how powerful his soul had become. And in addition, after being born, every day he had been nurtured and cleansed by natural elemental energy, rendering his body as pure as a newborn infant's body, without any impurities. The purity of his body was on par with a Xiantian lifeform!

His body was as pure as a Xiantian lifeform's.

His soul was so powerful that he could divide his mind.

With these two strengths combined, it was natural that he would have the utmost aptitude for Fiendgod Body Refining.

"For my son to have this sort of natural gift..." Snow's face had turned red, and she was so excited that her body was shaking. "Ishwin, the Moon in one hand, and the Sun in the other. Osmanthus Tree was born, and the Golden Crow flies! This is something out of the legends! Our son will definitely have great accomplishments when training in accordance to the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens].

"Right." Ishwin was very excited as well.

When his son was born, he had sensed that his son's arteries were very weak, and his bones were very ordinary as well. Although he knew that his son had been injured in the womb, he was still somewhat disappointed, because he knew...in this brutal, man-eat-man world, anyone who had no power would find it hard to live a good life. While he was alive, he could protect his son, but what if he died?

"This is my son! The son of Ji Ishwin!" Ishwin held his wife's hand tightly, and the two stared with excitement and hope towards their son.

Which parents didn't hope that their 'children would fly like dragons'?

.....

Ning's eyes were closed, and he continued to sit on his knees, holding his two hands in front of him limply, with the Lunar Star in one, and the Solar Star in the other.

Those two miniature floating Solar Star and Lunar Stars were separately transmitting energy nonstop into Ning's body. The power of the Sun and the power of the Moon were quickly absorbed by the ravenous cells in his body, and Ning's entire musculature and bone structure were undergoing constant transformations.

"Swish..." A layer of ice suddenly appeared on the beast fur clothes which Ning was wearing.

But then, "Crackle crackle crackle." The back of Ning's clothes suddenly began to burn with fire.

Both frozen and blazing.

This constant interchange was resulting in his furs starting to split apart.

"Hrm?" Ishwin frowned. He pointed with a finger, and a ray of blue flowing light leaped out of his finger towards Ning's back, and the already half-ragged fur clothes totally split apart and collapsed, leaving Ning's back totally bare. On Ning's tender, young back, there was silver light flashing on the left, while golden light flashing on the right.

On the left, frozen side, the silver light was constantly flowing and slowly forming into a pattern.

On the right, blazing side, the golden light was also constantly flowing and also formed a separate pattern.

"Divine Tattoos!" Snow said softly. "The very first time he trains, he is already beginning to form the Divine Tattoos. Given this tattoo forming speed, in ten days or so the tattoo will have been fully formed. By then, the first level of the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] will be

done.

“Right.” Ishwin watched quietly.

Time passed...

The Divine Tattoos on Ning’s youthful back continued to grow. One could faintly tell that the left tattoo was that of a rabbit, while the right side was that of a crow.

The two great Divine Tattoos. The Divine Moon Tattoo was that of the Moon Rabbit, while the Divine Sun Tattoo was that of the Golden Crow.

“Hu.” Ning suddenly let out a long breath and opened his eyes. The Divine Tattoos on his back disappeared as well, and the two stellar bodies in his hands quickly dissipated. This caused Ning to be greatly startled. He had carefully read the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], and he knew exactly what it meant for him to have the Moon in one hand, the Sun in the other, especially with the Osmanthus Tree being born and the Golden Crow flying.

“What a powerful force.” Ning clenched his fists, feeling his body surge with power. “I’m just a four year old child and I’ve just been initiated into the Fiendgod Body Refining method, but I already am this strong.”

Suddenly, a cold voice rang out.

“Put on a change of clothes.” With a wave of his hands, his father Ishwin made a set of children’s fur clothes appear out of midair, then tossed it to his son.

“Yes.” Ning immediately grabbed it.

Snow was still looking at her son, her face filled with joy. The more she looked at him, the happier she felt. Her son was her pride and her joy. On the day he was born, she had been worried about her son’s future...but now, her son had demonstrated such inconceivable potential. As a mother, in her heart, naturally she felt filled with joy.

“Ning.” Ishwin said calmly.

“Father.” Ning listened carefully.

“Your potential is extraordinary. However, if you wish to break through the bottleneck of ordinary lifeforms and become a Xiantian lifeform, and then embark on the road to becoming an Immortal, potential alone isn’t enough.” Ishwin looked at his son. “You need to receive the best instruction possible.”

Ning said respectfully, “Father, please instruct me.”

“Snow.” Ishwin looked at his wife, Yuchi Snow. She nodded, and with a flip of her hand, two items appeared. One was a deep green gemstone, roughly the size of a fingernail. It was cut and very beautiful. The other was a flashing, rainbow-colored, fist-sized rock.

“This deep green stone is known as a kalestone.” Snow smiled. “This is a naturally forming gemstone which contains a miniature dimension inside of it. You can use it as part of a ring and store small items in it, or you can hide and store it within your belt. All you need to do to make it yours is to bind it with blood.”

“Kalestone!” Ning was overjoyed.

Training to become an Immortal was divided into two paths; the Body Refining path and the Ki Refining path.

Body Refiners belonged to the Fiendgod path and didn’t teach someone how to use magical treasures.

Ki Refiners, after becoming Xiantian lifeforms, would be able to control a few low level treasures...but even the lowest of manufactured treasures had a minimum requirement of the user being a Ki Refiner of the Xiantian level. Thus, most Fiendgod Body Refiners would also concurrently train in Ki.

However, Heaven always gave people a chance.

There were some naturally occurring objects which only needed to be bound by blood and didn’t have any strength requirements. kalestone was one of them!

“Bind it first.” Snow handed the kalestone and a shortsword over.

“Yes, Mother.” Ning accepted them. He didn’t hesitate at all, as he gently pricked his finger with the edge of the shortsword. A single drop of blood fell onto the kalestone and was quickly absorbed, giving the kalestone a hint of a blood color.

“Get in.” Ning willed the shortsword in his hand to disappear, and it did, reforming and floating within the miniature dimension inside the kalestone.

“Come out.” The shortsword appeared in his hands.

“How magical.” Ning was absolutely delighted.

He knew long ago that these naturally occurring dimensional gemstones existed. They weren’t like those manufactured treasures, which all had relatively large internal dimensions. The kalestone, as a naturally occurring object, had a much smaller internal dimension. Some were only the size of a fist or a head! These half-meter long ones were definitely an extremely precious treasure.

“Mother.” Ning hurriedly said. “Please help me make a belt and put the kalestone inside of it.”

“Alright.” Snow nodded. “The kalestone can be considered a treasure, but to our Ji clan, it isn’t something particularly valuable. Given your father’s status...a kalestone isn’t even worth discussing! However, the other treasure is something which your father only obtained after a life-and-death crisis!”

Snow solemnly handed over the fist-sized rock which shone with the colors of the rainbow.

“Bind it.” Snow looked at her son.

Ning stuck out his finger and once more pricked it gently with the shortsword. A single drop of blood fell onto that flashing rainbow stone. The blood was quickly absorbed, and inside the rock, countless red ‘arteries’ could suddenly be seen. And then, the fist-sized rock turned into a liquid and flowed towards Ning.

“What’s this?” Ning felt his entire body turn cold.

“It is like the kalestone. It is a naturally occurring treasure. The name of this treasure is the Goldstar Shirt.” Snow explained. “You can use it immediately after binding it. It will quickly enter and become part of your skin. With the protection of the Goldstar Shirt...nothing below the Xiantian lifeform level will be able to harm you with its attacks.”

Ning was shocked. “So powerful?”

He had never read of this in any of the books.

“The Darcian Dynasty, from the Fiendgod Era until now, has existed for countless of years, and the territory it rules over is vast. In the area around Swallow Mountain, our Ji clan reigns supreme. But in some of the more distant areas...there are clans that are even more powerful than our Ji clan.” Ishwin said. “In some of those ancient, mighty clans, some of the promising young youths, while they are still young, they will be given this Goldstar Shirt to help protect them.”

Ning was startled. Turning to look at his father, he felt a warm feeling in his heart.

His parents truly were very good to him.

Chapter 9: Archery

“Although the Goldstar Shirt is a treasure, I can break through it with a casual finger poke.” Ishwin looked at his son. “These things are all external. In the future, you must have accomplishments in the Fiendgod Body Refining techniques, and in term, Fiendgods specialize in body power. What you need to do is to utilize all of your potential and all of your strength.

“Right.” Ning nodded seriously.

“With the Fiendgod Body Refining, your strength will be great, your movements will be fast, your vision will be clear at great distances, your hearing will be more sensitive, and even your body’s recovery ability will be astonishing!” Ishwin looked at his son. “In order to transform these into true, mighty power...”

“First of all, what you need is a weapon!” Ishwin said. “Your strength might be ten times greater than your opponent’s, but your opponent might be able to shoot you to death from afar with an arrow. That’s what makes a good weapon so powerful.”

“In addition, you must be good at actually wielding a weapon. For example, a swordsman who has no internal strength but who has reached the second level of sword mastery, ‘man and sword become one’, is capable of easily piercing the throat of a powerful yet inexperienced warrior. After all, no matter how much internal strength the warrior has, he can’t block the sharpness of a sword!” Ishwin said slowly.

Ning understood this logic of course.

A powerful but stupid brute who encountered an assassin who was good at wielding shortswords would die in a single exchange of blows!

A strong body was just one aspect. Skill and technique was what determined how much of your power would be actually utilized! For example, in his past life, those competitors in the kickboxing or jujitsu competitions all were roughly on the same level in terms of physical fitness; it was technique and battle strategy which determined their

competitiveness.

“Tell me, what do you want to learn?” Ishwin looked at his son.

“Ning, son, think carefully.” Snow looked at her son as well.

Actually, in their hearts, they had already mapped out a plan for their son. After all, as they saw it, their son was still too young, even though he was smart and capable. But they still wanted to ask their son what he wanted, so as to help him learn to think everything through. And then, they would tell him what they thought and let him reflect on the differences.

“I want to learn three things.” Ning suddenly said.

“First of all, I wish to learn archery.” Ning said.

He was to walk on the Fiendgod Body Refining path. He would possess astonishing eyesight, and also enormous, heaven-granted strength. Naturally, he had to learn archery. The arrows released by a mighty Fiendgod were definitely capable of breaking past the sound barrier, and the power of its arrows was definitely far greater than the bullets of sniper rifles in his past life. He could kill his opponent from far away. And archery, according to the books he had read, wasn't too hard to learn.

“Second, I want to learn how to use twin swords!”

The Ji clan specialized in sword techniques!

His father Ishwin was nicknamed the ‘Raindrop Sword’. With a resource such as this at his disposal, he absolutely had to learn how to use swords!

“Twin swords?” Ishwin frowned. “Continue.”

“Third, I need to learn agility-enhancing techniques and escaping techniques.” Ning said. “These are what I need.”

If he encountered a powerful opponent, he would flee!

Only escaping techniques would allow a person to live longer. And the longer one lived, the more possibilities one would have.

Snow laughed. “Ning is headed in the right direction. However, I think

it's best if you first start with single swords...there isn't a single twin sword expert in the entire Ji clan, and when training in swords, the greatest danger is in losing concentration. You must focus all of your concentration on a single sword. Only this will allow you to achieve greater accomplishments."

"Your mother's words are correct." Ishwin looked at his son.

"Father, mother, I've been able to divide my mind since I was born." Ning raised his head to look at his parents. He wasn't able to explain about the [Nuwa Painting], and so he just had to claim that he was able to divide his mind since he was born.

"What?!"

"Divide your mind?"

Ishwin and Snow were both shocked.

"Do you know what dividing your mind means?" Ishwin growled. "It isn't as simple as multitasking. It means that your mind can simultaneously contemplate two separate matters without losing any effectiveness or causing any disruption."

"I truly can divide my mind." Ning said hurriedly.

"Then let's give it a test." Ishwin's eyes began to glow with an astonishing light. With one hand, he pulled over two pieces of chalk. "Use these two rocks to write on the ground. With your left hand, write your mother's name, while with your right hand, write my name. Write simultaneously!"

"Yes, father." Ning nodded.

Ning took the two pieces of chalk. It felt rather similar to the chalk he had used in his previous life. Immediately, he began to use his hands to write as instructed. Writing with the chalk actually felt quite natural.

Hua! Hua!

His left hand and right hand easily wrote at the same time, and what he wrote was the ancient, complicated script of this world. On one side, he

wrote the name, "Ji Ishwin". On the other, "Yuchi Snow." His strokes were firm and very graceful.

"Ning, you..." Snow was stunned.

"But..." Ishwin was stunned as well.

"No wonder. No wonder you were able to train in the [Red Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] so quickly." Ishwin said slowly. "So our son's soul is so powerful that he can divide his mind!"

Ishwin looked at his son as though he were looking at a piece of priceless, unpolished jade. Extremely excited, he said, "I've only been able to reach the level of dividing my mind because I've trained for so long. However, I've focused on using a single sword since I was young...my path is set, and hard to change! But my son is able to divide his mind since birth...he is a born twin sword user. He will be able to use twin swords as though two people were wielding them and make his opponents feel like they are being attacked by two people at once. What's more, those two people will have their hearts and intentions totally linked, increasing the effectiveness ten times over!"

"From today onwards, I will personally train you in using swords!"
Ishwin looked at his son.

....

Early next morning.

The thick natural energy of the world filled the hazy morning. Ning had already been brought by his father to the training grounds.

"Ning." Ishwin looked at his son, then pointed at a nearby fur-clad, bearded man. "This is the number one expert archer of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture. His name is 'Blindfish'. His archery skills are extremely high. Blindfish, come, let the little fellow see what you are all about."

"Yes." Blindfish said respectfully.

Ishwin walked in front of them towards four marble tablets, each one of them weighing several hundred pounds. Ishwin grabbed one of them, then

threw it far away into the distance, and then grabbed another one and tossed that one as well. In the blink of an eye, all four of them were howling through the air.

These massive, heavy tablets were thrown with such force that they made the air howl. They were like four missiles, and had transformed into black dots in the sky.

“Hrm.” A pitch-black greatbow appeared in the hands of the bearded man, Blindfish, along with four arrows. He raised his bow high.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Four arrows flashed through the skies, disappearing almost instantly as they chased after those four black dots. Pengpengpengpeng!!!! Those four black dots totally disappeared.

Ning gaped at the sight.

He gaped for a long time.

“When father tossed those heavy stones, he threw them at least one or two kilometers and turned them into missiles?” Ning felt stunned. “And this Blindfish’s arrows...I felt like, in the blink of an eye, in less than a second, they arrived at that distance of a kilometer or two away. If we calculate it carefully...these arrows must have at least travelled at the speed of nearly two thousand meters a second.”

“The legendary god, Houyi, once sent out nine arrows in a row and shot and killed nine Golden Crows.” Blindfish laughed loudly. “Young master, I only possess some superficial skills.”

“Master Blindfish, the rubble won’t hit or hurt anyone when it falls, will it?” Ning suddenly remembered to ask this question.

Ishwin shook his head. “Ning, your Master Blindfish is a Xiantian lifeform, and has infused his arrows with his own innate energy. When the arrows reached the tablets, they immediately blew the tablets into dust which will drift down slowly. How can there be rubble which would smash anyone?”

Ning was secretly shocked.

Formidable indeed.

“From today onwards, every morning, you will come train with your Master Blindfish for an hour in archery.” Ishwin said. “This can be considered your morning exercises. Blindfish, sorry to trouble you.”

“To be able to teach the young master is Blindfish’s glory.” Blindfish laughed loudly.

Ishwin nodded, then turned and left.

The entire training yard was very quiet. Only Blindfish and Ning were there. Not even a servant was present.

“Young master.” Blindfish looked at Ning. “To an archer, the most important thing is his bows and arrows. The arrow is divided into three parts; the arrowhead, the arrow shaft, and the feathers. As for the bow, it is comprised of the bowstring and the body. Arrows can be made in large quantities, but bows are far more precious!”

“There are two types of bows.”

“The first type of bow is made from an elastic bow body and a tough bowstring. When drawing the bow, the body of the bow will curve...and that is where the power comes from, the curving of the bow’s body. This is the most commonly seen type of bow, and is a fairly simple type of archery. It is easy to produce, and ordinary archers use it.”

“The second type of bow has a tough, inflexible bow body and an elastic bowstring. When pulling the bow, the bow’s body will essentially remain firm, while the bowstring will be pulled to an astonishing elastic length. This bow in my hand is that sort of bow!”

Blindfish handed the pitch-black greatbow in his hands to Ning.

Ning accepted this simple greatbow, and he instantly felt its weight. This greatbow was at least a hundred pounds heavy. He couldn’t help but stare at it carefully. The body of the greatbow was made from some sort of pitch-black metal which gleamed. The bowstring, however, was as thick as

a finger, and carried a blue color. A terrifying fiendish aura could dimly be sensed as coming from the bowstring.

“This bow body was forged from ‘thunderwind metal’ and is incomparably tough. But the bowstring is even more precious...it was made from one of the draconic tendons of a Greater Monster that was slain, a Dragonsnake. It possesses astonishing elasticity. Even if my strength was ten times greater, I wouldn’t be able to break it.” Blindfish laughed. “The name I gave my bow is ‘Thunderdragon Bow’.”

Ning’s eyes shone as he listened. A bowstring made from the tendons of a Dragonsnake, a Greater Monster?

“Come, let’s begin to learn the proper stance.” With a flip of his hand, Blindfish produced an ordinary bow.

“Standing shot stance, crouching shot stance, backwards shot stance, falling shot stance, running shot stance!” Blindfish looked at Ning. “Young master, your training will be divided into two segments. The first is the basic segment. The second is the mental segment.”

“In the basic segment, you need to practice those five stances to the point where ‘hand, eye, and arrow become one.’ You must always hit your target. Only then can you move to the next segment.”

“In the mental segment, the stances are no longer important. The only thing you need is for your ‘mind and arrow to become one’. You no longer need to use your eyes to see. That’s simply too slow. You must rely on your mind! In the blink of an eye, you will draw your bow and fire your arrows upon your target as fast as lightning. In a truly critical situation, you only have a heartbeat to do what you need. Nobody will give you a chance to slowly aim. When you have mastered the mental segment, then you will have completed your apprenticeship.”

Ning listened and nodded.

And then, according to Blindfish’s instructions, he began to train in the proper stance.

“Waist straight! Left arm extended!”

“That’s the correct posture for drawing the bow. Stay in that posture!”

“Eyes! Eyes! Are your eyes blind?”

As soon as he began teaching in earnest, Blindfish began to roar at him. The ignorant Ning was like a piece of white parchment. Howled at again and again, Ning could do nothing but endure it and slowly learn.

A ten thousand meter high building is still built up from the ground floor. An expert archer had to start with the basics as well.

Chapter 10: Footwork

After practicing archery for an hour, the Sun had already begun to rise.

“Ning, child, I shall be the one to teach you footwork.” Yuchi Snow, clad in white furs, smiled as she looked at her son.

“Yes.” Ning said.

Although he had exercised to the point where his waist and his back were bitterly sore, because he had trained in the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], his body’s regenerative speed was astonishingly high. Right now, his mind was clear, fresh, and full of energy.

“In close combat, footwork is every bit as importance as sword techniques!” Yuchi Snow said solemnly. “When two people engage in a battle, the one with better footwork and agility can make it hard for the opponent to injure them, while they are able to easily injure the opponent.”

Ning nodded.

He understood this logic.

Close combat didn’t just mean standing there like an idiot, waving swords and sabers at each other. It was constantly changing positions like an unpredictable shadow. In his past life, he had seen taekwondo and karate experts. Those most elite competitors all valued footwork highly, and their footwork was exquisite, capable of causing ten enemy punches in a row to miss, or at least have their power reduced greatly.

The importance of footwork was arguably even higher than that of attacking techniques! Because he had been tormented by illness in his past life, Ning truly and ardently enjoyed watching those competitions, which made him understand the importance of footwork in those taekwondo and karate competitions.

In this world where spirits and monsters abounded, the basics were still the same.

Footwork was one of the most important things.

“I will teach you a footwork technique known as the [Shadewind Steps].” Snow said. “Don’t be fooled by its ordinary name. This is a very amazing set of footwork techniques. I am the only one who knows it in our Ji clan, and even amongst all five Prefectures, it is considered the highest type of footwork technique. Once you begin learning this footwork technique, you will understand how to dodge and move about in tight areas, while also learning how to easily flee.”

“First, carefully read the six basic movements.” With a flip of her hand, Snow made a thick yellow book appear out of nowhere.

Ning accepted it and began to read it carefully.

This book described the [Shadewind Steps] and its six basic movements. All six of the movements were exquisite and profound in their movements and usage of force and energy.

“Don’t just stare at it.” Snow pointed at a distant area. “Look over there.”

Ning turned his head and saw wooden pillars. There must have been thousands of wooden pillars there, and they were all of different height and at different distances from each other. Above these wooden stakes was a number of beast capes, thousands of them which dotted the area like ropes.

“That is known as the Thousand Star Array.” Snow said. “Through the usage of the Thousand Star Array, within ten years, you should be able to be able to reach the ‘Ruwei’ stage of the Shadewind Steps. If it wasn’t for the Thousand Star Array...you probably would have to spend a hundred times the amount of time.”

“The [Shadewind Steps] technique has three stages.”

“First, the basic stage.”

“Second, the advanced stage.”

“Third, one with the world.”

Snow looked at Ning. “Actually, all techniques, be it footwork, sword, saber, spear, or anything else, can be divided into these three stages. For

example, the 'advanced stage' of sword technique is often described as 'one with the sword'."

"Have you memorized the mysteries of the six basic movements?" Snow asked.

"Yes." Ning nodded.

Snow then walked towards the Thousand Star Array, then pointed at one of the very short pillars. "Go stand on top of this pillar."

"Yes." Ning easily jumped onto the wooden pillar.

He instantly felt wobbly. The pillar wasn't very thick, and there was only enough space for a single foot. Fortunately, after having trained in the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], he had an extremely good sense of balance. This was the only reason why he was able to stand stably.

"Listen to my orders. Whichever one of the six basic movements I ask you to use, that's what you use." Snow said. "The 'advancing' move!"

Ning immediately tried to charge forward and step atop another pillar in front of him, but when he brushed against a beast skin rope and, with a swish, he fell down to the ground.

"Remember, whenever you are moving in the Thousand Star Array, you must not step onto any of the beast skins. Once you do so, you'll have to start over again." Snow said.

Ning ground his teeth.

He refused to believe it would happen again.

He once again hopped onto the short pillar, and then, using the 'advancing' move, he dodged past the beast skin and moved onto the next wooden pillar. However, he had used too much force. His body swayed for a long while before he was able to steady himself on that one foot again.

"Remember, your movements must be like nails, driving a nail down with each step. When you land on the pillar, you must be nailed to it!" Snow said. "Each step cannot be too small or too large. It cannot be too

light or too heavy. Just now, you swayed wildly. If this was a life or death fight, you would've been stabbed to death by an enemy who would've discovered a flaw in your attacks. Continue. The 'advancing' move!"

"The 'advancing' step!"

"The 'sidestep' step!"

"The 'leaping' step!"

"The 'backwards' step!"

"The 'withdrawing' step!"

"The 'turning' step!"

Snow snapped one order after another.

Actually, all footwork techniques relied on these basic movements. But the differences between different techniques were like night and day in terms of skill. Some would make you move as fast as a bolt of lightning, while others would make you as agile and graceful as the wind, or perhaps as unpredictable as a spirit.

Each footwork technique had its own mysteries, and naturally would have different effects in battle.

"Oof!" He hadn't leapt high enough, and his back had brushed against the beast skin ropes, causing him to be unable to land onto the wooden pillar. He fell down.

Not saying a word, Ning climbed back onto the pillar.

"Oof!" His knee hadn't been bent enough.

"Oof!" He had used too much force.

...

On those thousands of wooden pillars, Ning was moving like a flash, wildly training in these six basic steps. Because of the obstruction of the beast skins, Ning's body also had to undergo various contortions to dodge them. But no matter what postures he used, the most important thing was that his center of gravity had to be stable, and his feet had to be stable!

“Mother, how long will I train like this for?” Ning had fallen so many times.

“Ning, son, start from the shortest pillar and move through all 1008 wooden pillars, then jump down from the tallest one! You are not to touch any of the beast skins on the way!”

“If you are able to complete this within the time it takes for one to take ten breaths, then you will have mastered the ‘basic’ level of this footwork.” Yuchi Snow laughed.

Ning was stunned when he heard this. “What? In ten breaths? Such a short period of time...even on running on the flat ground, I wouldn’t be able to do that in ten breaths.” 1008 wooden pillars, all of which had to be traversed. That was a distance of a thousand or so meters. It would take him a while to travel that distance at a full run.”

“Later, Ning, when you have finished mastering the first level of the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], you would be able to travel a thousand meters on the ground in ten breaths.” Snow laughed.

“But...” Ning was speechless.

“Moving in the Thousand Star Array as though you were on the ground... only then would you have mastered the ‘basic’ stage.”

“Then what about the second, ‘advanced’ stage?” Ning couldn’t help but ask.

Snow pushed one of the nearby beast skin ropes, which began to collide with the other beast skins. Soon, the thousand plus beast skins were all swaying against and hitting each other in a totally wild, chaotic manner.

“The second stage, the ‘advanced’ stage, requires you to once again start from the lowest pillar and move through all 1008 pillars, then jump down from the tallest one, in the span of ten breaths, without touching any of the beast skin ropes. However...for the ‘advanced’ stage, all of the beast skins will be striking each other.” Snow looked at Ning. “Once you can do that, you will have mastered the ‘advanced’ stage.”

“But but but...how is that possible? If all the beast skins are swaying

about, how will I dodge them? There would probably only be a split second for me to dodge the beast skins and also jump onto the wooden pillars. And in such a short time frame..." Ning felt that this was simply too hard, impossibly hard.

"That is why I said that with the help of the Thousand Star Array, you should need ten years to reach the 'advanced' stage of the [Shadewind Steps]." Snow said. "From now until lunch time, you will continuously practice here at the Thousand Star Array."

"Then what about the third stage, 'one with the world'?" Ning couldn't help but ask.

Snow looked at Ning and laughed. "That's on an entirely different level. Once you reach it, you'll understand."

"How powerful is it? You can at least explain it." Ning asked.

"Alright. If I have to describe it...even ten thousand arrows raining down on me at the same time wouldn't be able to injure me at all." Snow looked at her son.

"Ten thousand arrows at the same time?" Ning instantly imagined a thick cluster of countless arrows raining down, but none of them able to touch him. This was inconceivable. A human's body occupied a certain amount of space, after all. If those countless arrows filled the skies, logically speaking, there should be no way to dodge them."

Snow smiled. "Don't be discouraged. Most of the peak Houtian experts of the various tribes are only able to reach the first, 'basic' stage."

"Xiantian lifeforms are usually able to reach the second, 'advanced' stage."

"Most Zifu Disciples are able to reach the third stage of 'one with the world'. But of course, some extremely talented Xiantian lifeforms are able to reach the level of 'unity with the world'...such as your father!" Snow said.

"Father?" Ning was surprised and delighted.

“Your father’s footwork has reached the level of ‘one with the world’. And even in swordplay, which is harder to train in than footwork, your father has reached the ‘one with the world’ level.” Snow laughed. “That is why your father is the undisputed number one expert of the Ji clan’s West Prefecture. That’s why his prestige awes all of the countless tribes.”

Ning’s heart immediately swelled with a heroic feeling. Whatever his father could do, he himself could definitely do, especially since he had the [Nuwa Painting] and the wisdom from his past life!

“Continue!”

“The ‘advancing’ step!”

“The ‘turning’ step!”

“The ‘leaping’ step!”

Ning’s small, young frame carefully flashed about the Thousand Star Array, occasionally falling down.

....

After lunch.

After having eaten to his fill and rested for a while, Ning was pulled to the training yards once more by his father. The afternoon spring Sun was dazzlingly beautiful, and its rays were very comfortable.

“Father.” Ning looked at his glacier-like father, clad in a blood-red beast fur. His heart was filled with awe. His father had killed even Greater Monsters such as Dragonsnakes. In terms of strength and skill, his father had already reached an extremely high level. Even some Xiantian lifeforms had come to ask to be taken as his father’s disciple and learn his sword techniques.

His father had nine primary disciples, three of which were Xiantian lifeforms. But his father only taught the nine disciples once every month.

But Ning? He would be taught every day!

“From today onwards, I will teach you how to use the sword.” Ishwin looked at his son and said in a cold voice, “The sword is not the bow, nor is

it like footwork.”

“Archery training only requires one to become familiar with it. Once one’s strength increases and one’s vision improves, naturally, one will be able to fire more powerful arrows!”

“Although footwork is important, it is still supplemental...to kill an opponent, you still have to use your sword in the end!”

“Swords are considered short weapons! They are light and agile, with two edges. Their usage is more precise and profound than that of sabers; whether by slashing, by stabbing, by chopping, by scraping, or by tapping, one can easily kill the opponent. Sometimes, a person who is training incorrectly can even hurt himself. It is the truest weapon of war.” Ishwin looked at his son.

Ning could feel his blood boiling, and he was extremely eager. His eyes were shining. “Father, what sort of sword technique will I learn?”

“Sword technique? Wait a few more years!” Ishwin said coldly.

“Wait a few more years?” Ning was confused.

Ishwin said coldly, “The movements of the sword are birthed by your body! If you wish to use the sword well, then first, you must control your body well. First, you must train in boxing. After your body and your arms are extremely agile and you can fully control your strength, then your body will be ready to learn sword techniques!”

“But preparing your body isn’t enough.”

“You must also prepare your ‘mind’ for learning the sword!”

Chapter 11: Sword Training

Ning, listening to this, felt totally confused, as though his head was covered by mist and clouds. “Father, you say that I must prepare my body before I can train with a sword. I can just barely understand that. But I must also prepare my ‘mind’? What does that mean?”

“Don’t be impatient.”

Ishwin looked at his son. A thick book appeared in his hands out of nowhere. He tossed it towards Ning. “First, closely read through this boxing manual. There are sixteen stances in this boxing technique. It contains the simplest yet most fundamental of methods to allow one’s body to exert strength. Once you have mastered this boxing technique, your entire body will act as you will and you will be able to exert strength with ease.”

“The sword is born from your body. If not even your body acts as you wish it to, how can your sword act as you wish it to?” Ishwin looked at his son, worried that his son would bite off more than he could chew. “First, you must calm your mind.”

Ning understood the logic that ‘sharpening the knife didn’t slow down the cutting process’.

“Yes, father.” Ning said as he lowered his head to begin reading the book. He began to closely review the mysteries of boxing described in the book. The book was quite thick, but actually, it was because it was made from animal leathers, which made every page very thick.

After memorizing the profound secrets, he began to train. His father constantly gave him advice and pointed out his mistakes, or even demonstrated himself so as to help Ning understand.

Actually, the [Shadewind Steps] also contained some principles on exerting force, but the [Shadewind Steps] were primarily about using force in the legs. Because he had some prior experience now...Ning learned relatively quickly.

Two hours later.

“Rest a while.” Ishwin looked at his sweaty son. “In the future, you will spend two hours every day training your boxing, unless and until I judge that your body is prepared to train with the sword.”

“Preparing your body to train with the sword is just one aspect.”

“You must also prepare your ‘mind’ to wield the sword.” Two black metal swords appeared in Ishwin’s hands, and he tossed them to his son. “Take them!”

Ning took the two swords.

Ishwin pointed to an empty area. Hu. A metallic puppet appeared out of nowhere, wielding a single saber.

“This is a puppet.” Ishwin said. “Ki Refining practitioners of the Immortal way are often good at producing these puppets. This one is just a very ordinary puppet, with the power of a master-level Houtian combatant. However, its body is extremely tough.”

“Father, what are those red spots on its body?” Ning wondered.

The black metal puppet had over ten red dots on its body. The red dots were located between its forehead, on its throat, on its chest, on its arms, hands, back, and some other areas.

“Try stabbing at the red dot on its forehead.” Ishwin said. “You have to be fast.”

“Yes.” Ning stabbed out fiercely with his right hand.

Hua!

The tip of the sword pierced forward, but it struck the head, roughly an inch away from the red dot.

“But...” Ning was slightly startled. He clearly had aimed at the red dot. He couldn’t help but try stabbing three more times, but the results were always the same, slightly off.

“Have you discovered it?” Ishwin said calmly. “Although you want to

stab it in the middle of the forehead, when you actually try to do so, you aren't able to do so accurately. How can you stab accurately? First, you have to have to control your body perfectly. Second, you have to train countless times."

"Every single sword technique can be described as being composed of thirteen specific movements; chop, pierce, scrape, sweep, break, tap, cleave, support, intercept, twist, lift, draw, and sheath."

"Chop, pierce, scrape, sweep, tap, cleave; these are used to attack."

"Support, break, intercept, twist, lift, draw, and sheath; these are used to defend."

Ishwin pointed at the metal puppet. "This puppet isn't moving at all, and it has nine red dots on its body. Execute the 'chop, pierce, scrape, sweep, cleave, and tap' movements against it. I will teach you the secrets to every single movement and how to move in harmony with your attacks. Every single basic movement must be practiced at least ten million times!"

"In the future, the puppet will begin to move and chop at you with its own saber techniques. You will then use the 'support, intercept, twist, lift, draw, break, and sheath' movements, the seven basic defense movements, to defend yourself. You will train all of these movements ten million times as well."

"Attack!"

"Defend!"

"After you have become familiar with these two, the puppet will engage in battle against you, and you will use the combined thirteen stances to fight against it." Ishwin looked at his son. "When the day comes when your thirteen basic stances have become engrained into your mind and your bones, and when you are perfectly accurate, that is when you will have absorbed the essence of the sword into your mind. Only then will your mind be ready to train in the sword."

Ning listened with his breath held.

"Prepare your body."

“Prepare your mind.”

“Afterwards, you will be able to truly start training in sword techniques.” Ishwin looked at his son. “Sword techniques are very complicated, but they are still formed from these thirteen basic movements. If you aren’t even able to memorize and absorb these thirteen basic movements...how can you possibly have any achievements in training with the sword?”

“After you have truly become familiar with the sword techniques I will pass down to you, then you can be considered to have reached the first, ‘basic’ level of wielding a sword.”

“The sword has three levels as well.”

“The basic level, the advanced level, and the ‘one with the world’ level!”

“The ‘advanced level’ for footwork requires precise control over the body. But the ‘advanced level’ for the sword requires one to have precise control over both the body and the sword, and then merge them into one! It is ten times harder!”

“Becoming ‘one with the world’? That’s even farther off.”

Ishwin looked at his son. “Ji Ning, do you now understand the path you must walk?”

“Yes.” Ning nodded heavily.

The [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] training technique would give him a Fiendgod’s body and inconceivable strength.

But the training in footwork and swordplay would decide...how much of that strength he would be able to use!

“Father, how long would I need to train before I can reach the level of ‘one with the sword’?” Ning couldn’t help but ask.

“Hard to say.” Ishwin shook his head. “In the past, I had spent six years mastering the basics, then six more before becoming ‘one with the sword’. You can say that it took me twelve years!”

“Twelve years?” Ning held his breath.

His father, despite being young, had become the number one expert of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture. Someone as peerless of a talent had him had needed twelve years. Many ordinary people...would spend their lives training without being able to reach the 'one with the sword' level.

"Don't bite off more than you can chew. Take things one stable step at a time." Ishwin looked at his son. "Let's begin. Let me first teach you the 'pierce' movement of the thirteen basic movements!"

.....

Under his father's guidance, Ning's posture was very correct as he pierced repeatedly! Chopped repeatedly! Scraped repeatedly! Tapped repeatedly!

This was very boring.

And very tiring.

Fortunately, Ning had astonishing regenerating capabilities. And given his experience in being tormented by illness in his past life...he was a person who would not easily give up.

After training attacking movements for two hours, he began to train defending movements for another two hours.

The metal puppet wouldn't get tired, delivering endless hacking blows with the saber for Ning to defend against.

"Ishwin." Snow stood from afar, watching her son train hard.

Ishwin walked to his wife's side as well, and both of them watched that distant metal puppet battle against their son. "Snow. I didn't expect this. I really didn't expect...that our son would have such strong willpower. I had even prepared for him to complain about being tired, and prepared to force him to continue training. I didn't expect that I don't need to force him at all!"

"When he was training his footwork in the morning..." Snow felt sorry for her child. "Even though he said he was tired, all he did was talk. He didn't stop a single time. Six hours in the morning, six hours in the

afternoon...twelve hours of the day spent training. Ning is still very young...”

“I still remember when I was young.” Ishwin said softly. “At that time, I was forced by my father to train. I felt too tired and that I was at the point of collapse, but whenever I gave up, my father would use his whip to beat me. I cried each time I drew my sword or used it to pierce...that continued until I turned ten, and my father was killed by a Greater Monster from Eastlake Mountain. The status of my mother and I dropped by a thousand fathoms. Seeing how cold everyone had become towards us and then my mother die of illness...I finally woke up. I no longer said I was tired, or that I was hurting. Every day, I focused on my training.”

Someone who had never trained before would never know how exhausting training was.

Tiring to the body. Tiring to the mind.

Someone who wasn't sufficiently mentally resolved or who had insufficient desire wouldn't be able to persevere.

“I had my doubts about our son's future accomplishments.” Ishwin said softly. “Although his aptitude for the Fiendgod Body Refining is very high, if he doesn't work hard, he still wouldn't accomplish much...but now, I believe that my son will definitely become one of the true experts of this world. He definitely will!”

Hearing her husband's words, Snow stared at her son who was still training in the distance. She gently nodded. “I believe it too!”

.....

Watching himself grow stronger, even stronger than those ‘supermen’ in the movies, was an absolutely wonderful feeling!

A year later.

Hua!

Blindfish, standing far away, threw four stones up into the air. The slightly taller Ning nocked his bow while grabbing four arrows, holding

them tightly between his five fingers.

Shua! Shua! Shua! Shua!

Four arrows flashed out simultaneously, leaving behind four trails of air in the sky, hitting all four of the rocks that had been thrown up. The four rocks all shattered into tiny pieces which fell to the ground.

“Good.” Blindfish walked over, laughing loudly like the thunder.

“Master Blindfish.” Ning put away the bow.

“You’ve already mastered the mental segment. You’ve even quickly mastered my pride and my joy, the ‘Quadshot’ skill.” Blindfish praised as he nodded. “I have nothing left to teach you when it comes to archery. Next, you will have to just continuously train and build up experience. As your strength grows, you will be able to fire more powerful arrows. This training courtyard is now too small for you. You need to go to a larger, more expansive place and shoot arrows from a distance of one, two, or even three or four kilometers! The farther away you are shooting from, the more you will have to factor in the wind and the environment.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded.

Archery required one to be extremely precise.

One needed to consider the strength of the pull, the trajectory of the arrow, and also the downward pull of gravity. At the same time, one had to factor in the wind speed!

Although it was complicated, as long as one could sense the direction and strength of the wind, one would be able to shoot without even needing to aim. This was because the question of from what angle to fire from and how to fire would have already been built into one’s bones from countless repetitive training exercises. At least, to the current Ning...within a range of five hundred meters, not even a fly could escape his arrows!

But this was far from being enough!

As his strength grew, his arrows would be more powerful as well. Some Xiantian lifeform’s arrows would fly several kilometers and still have

tremendous force! The greater the distance, the more difficult it would be to shoot accurately as well...it required even more training and experience.

“Starting tomorrow, I won’t come here anymore. Young master, you are the most talented student I have ever taught.” Blindfish looked at Ning.
“Don’t waste your talent. In the future, you will definitely become the most terrifying godly archer in the Swallow Mountain area.”

Chapter 12: Six Years

Within the training courtyard, a youth clad in beast fur was wielding a black blunt sword. He stood there, and around him there were nine tall and powerful warriors. These valiant warriors all wore armor and wielding long spears, swords, and sabers, and other weapons in their hands. But none of the weapons had been edged or sharpened.

Six years. Ning, who had trained for six years, was now ten years old. But because in this life, he had been training in accordance with the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], he had already reached a height of 1.6 meters tall, just ten centimeters shorter than he had been in his previous life. His appearance was almost identical to how he had looked in his previous life. Perhaps this was what the saying, ‘a person’s appearance is birthed by their mind’. If one had to find a difference...then the difference was, in his previous life, his face was always sickly pale, while in this life, it was filled with boundless life and energy.

“Same rule as always.” Ning stared at the people around him, his gaze even more terrifying than that of monsters. “As long as any of you can strike me, each person will be awarded a beasthead of gold!”

“Grr!”

“Careful, young master!”

“Haha, a beasthead of gold. Brothers, let’s let the young master see how powerful we are.” These brave warriors began to roar. They were the mightiest warriors within the armies of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture; the Ninefang Warriors! For someone to be awarded the title of Ninefang Warrior required their internal energy to have reached the limits of the Houtian level, and also be warriors with significant battle experience.

A beasthead of gold meant ten pounds of gold. Gold coins were used as a form of currency in the countless tribes, and ten pounds of gold, to these powerful warriors, was an extremely attractive offer.

But they didn’t dare to be incautious, because Ning’s power had spread across the army long ago. He had often sparred in the army with some of

the elite soldiers...and thus, Ning's ability had risen rapidly, as these warriors all knew. Even if nine of the most powerful warriors joined forces against him...defeating Ning would still be a hard task. However, it was still possible.

The blunt black sword in hand, Ning stared quietly at the surrounding people.

Actually, ever since he had learned the reputedly most complicated of sword techniques [108 Swords of the Gods and Demons] and mastered it to the point where his father nodded in satisfaction, sparring with the metal puppet had become meaningless. Thus, he was permitted to begin sparring with the large number of soldiers and warriors in their army. While sparring, they always used blunt weapons.

At the same time, his father had given him a strict order: "When sparring with others, you are only allowed to use a single sword! In addition, you are only permitted to use a tenth of your real strength! Only when sparring with your mother and I are you allowed to use the twin swords. Remember, the twin swords are your secret weapon. You are only permitted to use it when you really intend to kill your opponent."

Thus...

Although Ning's fame had become widespread across the army and he had been acknowledged as a rare talent, that was just the tip of the iceberg. But of course, when engaging in battle, Ning used all of his available skill in the 'single sword techniques' and in the 'footwork' techniques.

....

The nine warriors surrounded Ning, walking in a circle around him while staring at him as though staring at their prey.

Ning just stood there, as unmoving as a mountain.

"Shua!" One of the nine soldiers surrounding him suddenly charged forward. The bald soldier was wielding a longsword in his hands, and struck out with it like a viper, instantly arriving next to Ning.

Faced with this fierce spear, Ning's body flickered and he drew near the bald warrior's body, causing the spear to miss its mark.

Spears were weakest against close quarters combat!

"Chi!" The blunt sword in Ning's hand sliced out. As the sword flashed towards him, the bald warrior hurriedly used his feet to kick against his long spear, sending it sweeping towards Ning as he himself rolled back into the array of soldiers surrounding Ning.

"Wow, that was dangerous. I almost got ended in one exchange. Brothers, be careful." The bald warrior quickly called out as he returned to the others.

Ning had already stepped on top of that long spear, staring at the people around him. "It is better if you come all at once. Otherwise, you'll have no chance."

"Let's go."

"Let's do it."

The nine warriors, sensing the disparity in power, didn't launch any more probing attacks. They immediately charged forward at full strength.

The wind howled. Sabers flashed. The shadow of sword agilely danced about. Spears hissed through the air like dragons. Sticks smashed down like ferocious tigers. Attacks came from every direction towards Ning, while Ning just stood there, just occasionally taking a step back or turning. These seemingly minute movements resulted in many of the warriors' attacks missing.

The clanging sounds of weapons bashing against each other could be heard like thunderclaps. Clearly, these blows carried great force.

Occasionally, the sound was just a whisper-soft snick.

"Ninefang Warriors really live up to their name. These nine have really good teamwork. If it was just five or six of them...I would be able to beat them in an instant. But the nine working together have put me at a complete disadvantage." Ning found it very difficult to deal with the storm

of attacks from these nine warriors. After all, he only had one sword. Under this sort of pressure, he was forced to use his sword techniques and his footwork techniques to their utmost.

“Hu!”

“Hu!”

The sword howled.

Ning suddenly felt intoxicated. Right at this moment, his body and his sword seemed to be in perfect harmony, and he seemed to even somehow feel the ‘body’ of the sword itself, and even the wind which blew past the sword at high speed.

“Chi!” The blunt black sword gently chopped against a cavalry saber. It trembled, but then with a twist, it pushed the enemy’s blade to the side and out of the enemy’s control. And then, the tip of the sword went forward, stabbing into the warrior’s chest. The warrior felt the pressure against his chest, and he immediately retreated two steps, then sat down.

“Hu.” The blunt black sword slashed through a curved pattern in the air, easily avoiding the opponent’s blocking longspear, then slapping with the flat against the bald warrior’s face. With a bang, one of the man’s tooth went flying and was knocked away.

Time seemed to past as slowly as a leaf falling down in the autumn wind.

Ning’s sword had suddenly become extremely nimble, and the movements of his sword were careful and minute, able to change in a flash. In a life and death battle...a momentary advantage was enough to change the outcome of a battle into a victory. Thus, although Ning had previously found it very hard to resist those nine warriors, he now, in the blink of an eye, was able to knock them all down.

“Congratulations, young master.”

“Congratulations, young master, on your swordplay reaching the ‘advanced’ stage, ‘one with the sword’.”

The warriors were both shocked and excited. All of them congratulated him.

A youth who was merely ten years old was able to reach the 'advanced' stage of swordplay, and become 'one with the sword'. This was more incredible than even the accomplishments of his father, the 'Raindrop Sword', Ji Ishwin.

"Hahaha..." Ning was extremely excited as well. Six years. Six years of constantly training with the sword. Every day, aside from the time he spent training his archery skills outside the city at dawn, he spent virtually all of his time training with the sword. Sometimes he would train with his father, while sometimes he would train with his father's disciples. Sometimes, he would spar against the army soldiers.

The sword had long ago imprinted itself into his bones.

After training with the sword for ten million times, his accuracy with the sword had reached a terrifying level a long time ago.

And, with his ability to split his mind, his sword techniques became all the more elusive and unpredictable.

He had the body of a Fiendgod, and in terms of Ki Refining, he had already reached the peak of the Houtian stage in internal energy. This caused his sword attacks to be unstoppable.

And finally, today!

All of these accumulated experiences had formed a cohesive whole, and he entered the 'advanced' stage of swordplay, 'one with the sword'!

"Everyone, today you have helped me to make a breakthrough. Although I don't have much, I am giving each of you a beasthead of gold. Don't try to refuse." Ning laughed loudly.

The nine warriors exchanged glances, then said in unison, "Thank you, young master!"

If they had simply lost, they wouldn't have accepted it. After all, these Ninefang Warriors had their own pride and dignity. But for young master

Ning to reach the 'one with the sword' level was a major, joyous occasion. Such a joyous occasion...it was only fair and proper that they, too, receive some gifts.

"Nine of them."

The distant Spring Grass and Autumn Leaf, his two maids, hurriedly ran over with stone platters. Atop the stone platters were nine beastheads of gold. They were all the highest quality gold! The nine warriors laughed as they accepted it, while at the same time, feeling moved...young master Ning truly was powerful. But they had all seen with their own eyes how hard Ning had worked over these years.

"Congratulations, young master. Felicitations, young master." After the nine warriors left, Spring Grass and Autumn Leaf allowed their faces to be covered with joy and celebration.

Six years had passed, and the two maids were now twenty years old. This was the most bewitching age for a woman. Maids such as these would usually be their master's women, which is why they had long ago in their hearts decided to consider Ning as their world, as their god. To see their young master become so powerful, they naturally were extremely happy.

"Hahaha..." Ning laughed as well.

Anyone would be excited. After all, he had trained bitterly since he was young. How could he not be excited upon succeeding?

Only after training with the sword for two years had his father decided that his 'body' and his 'mind' were prepared to learn sword techniques. Only then had he been taught the [108 Swords of the Gods and Demons] technique.

After another year, when he mastered the first level, his father permitted him to spar with others.

After three more years, culminating in this day today, he had finally reached the second level, the 'advanced' level, becoming 'one with the sword'.

"Spring Grass, Autumn Leaf, come with me." Ning called out. What he

wanted to do the most right now was to go see his parents.

....

Deep in the mountain ranges, there was a series of furious howls.

There was a large number of black armored riders, and these armored riders all had extremely thick armor, all covered with spikes as well. Their mounts were tall and powerful furry beasts with a single horn. These furry beasts had two curved, fierce looking fangs which flashed with cold light. Their four hooves were thick and sturdy. When they ran, the earth itself shook.

The hundred black armored riders all gave off the aura of powerful experts.

“Huh?” The black armored riders all turned to stare at a place nearby. They saw a distant mountain quickly begin to turn red, and then begin to transform into scorching hot lava. A large amount of lava began to pour out from somewhere in the mountain, and faintly, a human figure could be seen walking on top of the lava, his entire body covered with flames. He walked straight towards them.

Hu.

With a single step, he leaped to the ground. He was bringing with him a ferocious scaled beast that was blackish-brown in color. Behind him, there was also a four-hooved beast that was walking as well. Quickly, the human figure flew out from the middle of the lava, revealing his face...it was a face belonging to an old man, with fiery red hair and a small scarlet snake hanging from his ear. The four-hooved beast also walked to the viper elder's side, seeming extremely obedient.

“Master.” The hundred black armored riders called out respectfully.

The viper elder laughed loudly. “We came hunting, but I didn't expect that we would run into an Armored Wyrms. My luck isn't bad. This Armored Wyrms is very close to becoming a Xiantian lifeform. When I get home, I need to spend some time raising it.”

“Master, master!” A voice suddenly rang out from the skies.

Ji Lee raised his head.

In mid-air, an enormous flying beast with blue feathered wings could be seen, with a man wearing an exquisite beast pelt seated atop it. After the flying beast landed at high speed, the rider immediately jumped off and landed on the ground, then came to one knee. "Master, there's news from the Prefecture."

"Speak." Lee frowned.

"Ishwin's son, Ning, has entered the 'one with the sword' stage today." The man said respectfully.

Lee stared at him, the fire surrounding his body blazing hotter. He was so angry that his entire body began to shake. Suddenly, he smashed that Armored Wurm he had captured into the distant mountain cliff. The heavy monstrous beast, at least ten thousand pounds in weight, turned into a blur. With a bang, it smashed against the distant mountain cliff, and on it appeared an enormous crevice which was now surrounded by hundred-meter long cracks. The Armored Wurm lay there in the crevice, blood pouring from its head, and its scales shattered. It had been smashed to death.

"Return to the West Prefecture City!" Lee ground his teeth for a long time before finally shouting out this order.

"Yes." The hundred black armored riders said in unison. Although they felt that throwing away the corpse of the Armored Wurm was a huge waste, their master, Ji Lee, was currently in a royal rage. Naturally, no one dared to contradict him.

Rumble rumble.

Lee, riding his four-hooved monstrous beast, was followed by his hundred black armored riders. They left the deep, mysterious mountain forest and quickly disappeared, only leaving behind that Armored Wurm in that crevice in the mountainside, its blood still dripping down the cliff.

Chapter 13: Five Major Sword Techniques

With a sinister look on his face, Lee returned to his estate. Behind him was the four-hooved beast. The two entered his estate, and those servants and house guards all knelt down or lowered their heads when seeing him. None of them dared to even breathe too loudly. They could all tell that their master, Lee, was in an extremely foul mood. Someone who upset him might be slapped to death.

“Father.” A sound from afar, and a middle-aged man clad in beast fur with dozens of braids in his hair came out.

Lee glanced at him. The person was his most competent son, and also one who had become a Xiantian lifeform; Ji Jadewich. Frowning, he said, “Jadewich, is this true? I just went out hunting, and shortly afterwards, I received news that Ishwin’s little animal has reached the ‘advanced’ stage of swordplay, ‘one with the sword’?”

“It is, father.” Jadewich shook his head and sighed. “Today, Ji Ning and nine Ninefang Warriors were sparring. He made a breakthrough in swordplay while sparring. There’s no doubt about this at all.”

“Argh!” Lee let out an angry sound. “The Heavens have set themselves against me, Ji Lee. My elder brother, Ji Young, was inferior to me, but due to my arrogance, I allowed him to seize the position of Prefecture Lord. He produced an outstanding descendant, Ji Ishwin, making his lineage even more stable. But now, an even more outstanding Ji Ning has been produced, who in six years managed to reach the ‘one with the sword’ level!”

“Reaching the ‘one with the sword’ level in just six years. Those three geniuses we selected from those countless tribes are far inferior to him by comparison.” Jadewich shook his head as well.

For the sake of blocking Ning’s progression, they had specially selected three outstandingly talented children near Ning’s age, and began to teach them from a young age. But they were still inferior to Ning.

“Just a bit off. If Grizzly was just three years younger...” Jadewich sighed.

“Grizzly?” Lee was startled.

Grizzly was his foster son.

In the past, when he had led the army to punish one of the larger tribes for a transgression, he had encountered a Greater Monster, a ‘Golden Grizzly Bear’. After a vicious, terrifying battle, the Golden Grizzly Bear had finally fled in defeat. Lee then raided the Golden Grizzly Bear’s lair, and found inside the lair an infant child. The infant wasn’t a year old, but was born with tremendous strength...and was very much to Lee’s liking. He had said, “Kid, you were snatched by a Golden Grizzly Bear but weren’t killed. Instead, it raised you? Hahaha...from today onwards, you will be the adopted son of myself, Ji Lee. I’ll name you...Grizzly!”

It was common for someone to raise an adopted son who possessed extraordinary abilities.

When Grizzly was brought back home, it was determined that he was one year old. He was now thirteen years old. Lee treated and raised Grizzly as a terrifying monstrous beast, having him engage beasts in battle since he was an infant, and sometimes even with monstrous beasts. Naturally, he also taught Grizzly the most suitable training methods...

In the middle of all that combat, last year, Grizzly had reached the stage of ‘one with the saber’.

“The Ceremony of the Golden Sword is held every four years. There will be one this year.” Jadewich narrowed his eyes. “Four years from now, there will be another one. In another four years...Grizzly will be seventeen. Only those sixteen and younger can participate in the Ceremony of the Golden Sword. Four years from now, Grizzly won’t even be able to participate, much less stop Ning!”

“The only hope we have right now is that the three little brats I took in will be able to become a Xiantian lifeform within these next four years.” Lee muttered.

“Right.” Jadewich nodded. “I personally selected the three of them out of all of the tribes as the most suited for Ki Refining. They’ve reached the peak of the Houtian level long ago. If a single one of them can advance to

the Xiantian level, then our victory is assured.”

Lee nodded as well. “A Xiantian Ki Refiner is capable of using magical treasures and would definitely win. Only, it is simply too hard to become a Xiantian lifeform...”

“All we can do is wait and see what Fate has to offer.” Jadewich said softly.

Lee nodded lightly.

Although they were struggling over the Prefecture Lord position, Ji Lee and Ji Jadewich never even thought about killing Ji Ning. In this vast world, for a clan to be able to survive...they had to be unified, and fratricide was definitely forbidden! In addition, Ning had already been selected as a potential heir. If someone dared to try and use a wicked method to kill Ji Ning, most likely everyone in the Five Prefectures of the Ji Clan would join forces to punish the murderer!

.....

The thick, large candle lit up the hall. Ishwin was seated in the primary seat, while Snow and Ning sat close to him.

The three of them were eating the meal in front of them on the table.

“Ishwin.” Snow looked at her son, his hands and mouth greasy from the meat he was eating. Her eyes were filled with pride. “Our son Ning mastered the basics in three years, and in three more years became ‘one with the sword’! It seems it will be easy for him to gain the position of Prefecture Lord.”

Holding a ramshorn goblet, Ishwin nodded lightly. “When Ning sparred with the others, he only used his internal force. He didn’t use any of the power of the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], the number one Fiendgod Body Refining method. And in addition, when sparring with outsiders, Ning has only used a single sword.”

Others didn’t know how powerful Ning was, but Ishwin and his wife knew exactly how capable their son was.

Seizing the golden sword?

As easy as picking something out of his pocket!

“Ning, at his current level of power, is already easily capable of seizing the golden sword. In four more years, even Xiantian lifeforms won’t be able to stop him.” Ishwin poured himself another cup of wine.

Ning continued to simply sit there, eating and drinking prodigious amounts of food.

Because he trained in the number one Fiendgod Body Refining, the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], he possessed the appetite of a Fiendgod as well. He could easily eat dozens of pounds of the meat of monstrous beasts in every meal. He had reached the third level of the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] two years ago. He was at a bottleneck now, but with one more step, he would reach the fourth level!

The fourth level would let him become a Xiantian lifeform, and one which belonged to the number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique. His battle ability would far outstrip that of normal Xiantian lifeforms by a hundred times or a thousand times.

“Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle.” Ning drank large mouthfuls of hot water, pouring it all down his mouth, then rubbed his stomach as he put it down. “That feels good.”

“Ning.” Snow looked at her son with a laugh.

“Mother.” Ning was very obedient. He could sense that his father cherished him but also valued the clan, while his mother had placed virtually all of her hopes and concerns in him. In her mother’s eyes, perhaps even the rise and fall of the entire Ji clan wasn’t nearly as important as her son.

Snow looked at her son. “When your father taught you the [108 Swords of the Gods and Demons], it was the most complicated level of sword techniques you could learn, and it was the most suitable set of sword techniques for you to reach the ‘one with the sword’ level. However, now that you have already reached that level, the [108 Swords of the Gods and

Demons] technique is no longer of much use to you.”

“Right.” Ishwin looked at his son. “Now, Ning! When I had you prepare your ‘body’ and your ‘mind’, I needed you to make all of your attacks as fast as lightning and incomparably accurate. I needed you to imprint those things in your bones. Only then did I teach you the [108 Swords of the Gods and Demons], and the purpose of that was...to let you go from something simple to complicated!”

“The path of sword training first goes from simple to complicated, and then from complicated back to simple. Only then can one be considered to have mastered the sword.” Ishwin looked at his son. “You have become ‘one with the sword’, and you can wield it as easily as your own hands. You can be considered to have gone from complicated back to simple.”

Ning nodded.

He understood this logic. If he was so stupid as to just constantly use those thirteen basic stances, he could still be considered an expert swordsman, but without having truly experienced ‘going from simple to complicated, then from complicated to simple’, it would be very hard for one to reach the ‘one with the sword’ level.

“Next, you will need to reach the level of being ‘one with the world’.” Ishwin sighed. “This step is an extremely hard step.”

“One with the world...” Ning was filled with anticipation.

“The previous sword techniques you’ve learned are now useless to you.” Ishwin looked at his son. “Your current level is enough to qualify you to learn the highest level swordplay of the Ji clan.”

Ning’s eyes lit up. The highest level swordplay of the Ji clan?

“Our Ji clan is famous because of our swordplay.” Ishwin sighed with emotion. “In turn, the city of the Ji clan of the Main Prefecture, the ‘City of Ten Thousand Swords’, was named because the ancestors of the Ji clan rose to fame due to the [Melody of 10000 Swords], which they used to establish themselves here.”

“After thousands of years, the Ji clan now has five highest level sword

arts. They are the [Melody of 10000 Swords], [Savage Thunderflame Sword], [Illusion Sutra], [Raindrop Sutra], and the [Polaris Secret Manual]. Every single technique is extremely profound and is beyond what the 'one with the sword' level is capable of. If you can make accomplishments in any of them, you will find that their power is boundless." Ishwin looked at his son. "I trained in the [Raindrop Sutra]. Most people, even after reaching the 'one with the sword' level, is at most able to select a single one of the arts to train in. This is because dividing the mind is simply too difficult. But Ning, since you are able to divide your mind in two, you would be able to choose two arts to train in."

Hu!

In Ishwin's hand, five books suddenly appeared. He casually tossed them out, and they flew straight over, landing in a neat stack on a nearby table, not touching any of the cups or plates.

"The highest level swordplay?" Ning looked at the five books. He understood that these were just abridged versions. Only after he made his choice would he receive the 'full versions'.

"Make your choice."

Ishwin looked at his son and said solemnly, "Once you have chosen, your choice will be recorded for the Ji clan of the Five Prefectures to review! If it isn't recorded down, you will be considered to have learned in secret. Anyone who does that will be exterminated by the combined forces of the Five Prefectures."

"Ah!" Ji Ning understood this, but he still couldn't help but feel surprised. "Then why is it that there was no such restriction on the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] technique that I learned?"

"Although the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] technique is the number one Fiendgod Body Refining, it is extremely widespread. Virtually all of the tribes on the level of the Ji clan possesses a copy. Therefore, it doesn't matter if our copy is leaked." Ishwin looked at his son. "Most Ki Refining methods and Fiendgod Body Refining methods aren't very valuable. Only the ultimate techniques of each clan are tightly

restricted, like these five sword techniques here. In the area around Swallow Mountain, four of these techniques are possessed only by our Ji clan. Only the [Polaris Secret Manual] is also in the possession of another entity, the Blackflame Sect.”

Ning nodded.

He knew that in the area around Swallow Mountain, aside from the armies of the Darcian Dynasty that were stationed here, there were in total, five other hegemonic powers. The Ji clan was also one of them.

These six hegemons engaged in constant battle, but none of them dared to offend the armies of the Darcian Dynasty!

“Right.” Ning immediately lowered his head and began to read, flipping through these five top-class sword techniques. If a person was at the ‘one with the sword’ level and then also possessed this sort of top-class sword technique, his power would definitely multiply.

“Raindrop Sutra...” This was the first one Ning looked at. This was the top-class technique which had made his father famous.

His father’s nickname, after all, was the ‘Raindrop Sword’!

Chapter 14: The Cage

[Raindrop Sutra]. The principle behind it was that of the saying, ‘dripping water can eventually tunnel through a rock’.

Its attacks were soft yet inexhaustible, seemingly as endless as the raindrops falling from the skies during a rainstorm, making the enemy find it difficult to even dodge. In turn, its defenses were utterly airtight... and at the same time, when tens of millions of raindrops converged on one point, it could form a terrifyingly explosive force. Even ordinary drops of water could eventually tunnel through a rock; the sword that had been transformed into ‘raindrops’ would naturally contain an unshakable, unyielding power.

“The [Raindrop Sutra] truly is profound and wondrous.” Ning nodded as he read it, then picked up the second book, [Polaris Secret Manual].

The [Polaris Secret Manual] was part of the legendary [Polaris Sword Manual]. It was divided into seven different sword stances, known as Dubhe, Merak, Phecda, Megrez, Alioth, Mizar, and Alkaid. These seven major sword stances all contained the power of the stars. They could be as ferocious and savage as the Voracious Alkaid Wolf Sword, or the extremely soft and extremely sinister Melodious Megrez Sword...

The sword technique was unfathomably mysterious, and was very hard to defend against.

“What a good sword technique.” Ning sighed in amazement as he read, before picking up the other three books.

[Savage Thunderflame Sword]. This was something which the ancestors of the Ji clan, when roving and training themselves elsewhere in the world, had been lucky enough to find. They had found a half-burned remnant of a book, and the words in it were not very clear. Only two words on the title could be seen: Thunderflame! In addition, they were only able to reclaim three complete sword stances from the book.

All of the stances were used to attack. When the stances were used, it was as though it contained the power of heavenly thunder and hellish

flames. There was no question that in terms of attack power, it was the undisputed champion amongst the sword techniques of the Ji clan! For just three stances to allow it to be ranked amongst the Five Major Sword Techniques of the Ji clan, one could imagine how that unnamed complete sword technique...definitely outstripped the other four sword techniques vastly.

However, although its strengths were apparent, its weaknesses were also apparent. This was because these vicious stances...were only three in number. Thus, they didn't perfectly link to each other. In addition, all three stances were purely offensive, without any defensive stances. How could experts, when engaged in battle, have no defensive stances? Thus, very few people would choose to train in this sword technique.

"I really want to see what the complete Savage Thunderflame Sword looks like." Ning couldn't help but sigh.

"If we had a complete copy," the nearby Ishwin said, "Then it would be, without question, the number one Immortal technique in Swallow Mountain."

Ning nodded, then picked up the fourth book.

[Illusion Sutra]. Strictly speaking, this wasn't a sword technique, because once one truly understood the meaning of the word 'Illusion', one could execute an 'Illusion Saber' technique, or an 'Illusion Spear' technique, or an 'Illusion Staff' technique...this was an insidious and powerful attacking technique that allowed one to hide one's true abilities and actions. Opponents often would die before even knowing what happened.

This technique was sinister to the extreme.

"This isn't suited to my temperament." The first technique Ning discarded was the [Illusion Sutra]. Picking something suited to a person was very important. A technique that was opposite of one's natural instincts, no matter how profound...would be incredibly difficult to train. Naturally, Ning immediately discarded it.

"Hrm, the last one was originally the greatest strength of the Ji clan." Ning began to flip through the [Melody of 10000 Swords].

The [Melody of 10000 Swords] was praised as the most complicated of the five sword techniques, far more complicated than the [108 Swords of the Gods and Demons] which Ning had previously learned. But although it was complicated, once one truly mastered it, the [Melody of 10000 Swords] could be simplified into three major stances. The 'One Sword, 10000 Shadows' stance, the '10000 Swords Become One', and the 'Melody of 10000 Swords'.

.....

Ning closed his eyes, pondering.

In terms of being the most awe-inspiring and most complicated, or perhaps even the simplest, it would be the [Melody of 10000 Swords].

In terms of being the most insidious and difficult to guard against, it would be the [Illusion Sutra].

In terms of being the most orthodox, it would be the [Polaris Secret Manual].

In terms of having the greatest defense, it would be the [Raindrop Sutra].

In terms of the most powerful attack and the deepest, most profound principles, it would be the [Savage Thunderflame Sword].

"First of all, the [Illusion Sutra] can be excluded. It doesn't suit my temperament!" Ning pondered. "The [Polaris Secret Manual] is part of the [Polaris Sword Manual]. In terms of attack, it isn't very strong. In defense, it isn't either. It isn't very exquisite either...it's comparatively average, but it isn't weak in any aspect either. When fighting against experts, one must have some sort of advantage! The [Polaris Secret Manual] can be excluded as well."

"Only three left. The [Melody of 10000 Swords], [Raindrop Sutra], and [Savage Thunderflame Sword]."

"The [Raindrop Sutra] is a must!" Ning thought to himself.

The Raindrop Sutra was like a curtain of endless raindrops. It was the most defensive technique amongst the five major sword techniques.

In a battle, defensive abilities were even more important than attacking abilities!

In his past life, Ning had seen many martial arts competitions. All of the champions were experts at dodging and defense. Even in soccer and basketball, there was the saying that 'defense is king'. Although attacks were pretty to look at...it was defense which truly gave the best chances at victory.

The venue was different, but the logic was the same!

In life and death battles, defense was also important. When encountering an expert more powerful than one's self, one might reach the point of only being able to defend and not attack. If one's defense was strong, then perhaps one might still live. But once those attack-focused people encountered those who were even stronger than them, once their attacks were not able to harm the opponent, they were finished.

"Defense is the same thing as preserving my life. First, I have to preserve my life; only then can I take the lives of others. In addition, this is the technique which my father used to become famous. With him personally instructing me, I will improve quickly. The [Raindrop Sutra] is a must." Ning carefully continued to consider. "As for the [Savage Thunderflame Sword] and the [Melody of 10000 Swords]..."

"Alright, [Savage Thunderflame Sword] it is!" Ning quickly made his decision.

If he was like an ordinary person who could only use a single sword technique, Ning probably would've made a choice between the [Raindrop Sutra] and the [Melody of 10000 Swords].

However, since he used twin swords, he already had the [Raindrop Sutra] for defense. Thus, for the second one, he chose the most offensively powerful [Savage Thunderflame Sword]. The [Savage Thunderflame Sword] had, as its flaw, no defensive techniques, but as a twin-sword wielder, that wasn't a flaw at all. He had already chosen the [Raindrop Sutra] for his defense, and thus what he now truly needed was a powerful killing technique.

“The [Raindrop Sutra] and the [Savage Thunderflame Sword].” Ning made up his mind. “The [Raindrop Sutra] is excellent at defense, while the [Savage Thunderflame Sword], despite only having three strokes, has three incomparably powerful killer moves.”

“In addition, once my [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] reaches the Xiantian level, my Divine Sun Tattoo and Divine Moon Tattoo will allow me to control fire and water. Water is very suited to the [Raindrop Sutra] while fire is very suited to the [Savage Thunderflame Sword]. I trust they will be of great help to my swordplay.”

“In defending, my defense must be so tight that not even a drop of water can get through!”

“In attacking, my attacks must be as explosively powerful as a fiery volcano!”

“I have twin swords. One for defense, one for offense. Or perhaps I can use both for defense. Or both for attack. I’ll do as I please!” Ning rapidly began to evaluate his future possibilities in battle, and he saw the path with crystal clarity. He knew...only once one had a full understanding as to how one would develop and progress would one be able to avoid taking a wrong path. This would help one develop faster!

In warfare, strategies were of greater importance than tactics.

In a person’s growth, there was a saying that planning counted for more than effort.

If one knew the right way one needed to advance towards, even if one didn’t make huge advances every day, after ten or twenty years, one would still reach a high level. But if one didn’t have a clear objective, and just blindly worked hard, a person might just be running in-place without improving, or perhaps even going backwards!

....

His careful examination of the books had taken two hours. That huge candle was already half used up. Ishwin and Snow just waited there quietly, occasionally exchanging a few words.

“Father, Mother.” Ning suddenly spoke.

“Hrm?” Ishwin and Snow both turned to look at him. Ishwin spoke.
“You’ve chosen?”

Ning nodded.

“Ning, son, what have you chosen? One or two?” Snow asked.

“I’ve chosen two.” Ning held out the two books. “One is the [Raindrop Sutra]. The other is the [Savage Thunderflame Sword].”

“[Raindrop Sutra]? [Savage Thunderflame Sword]?” Ishwin nodded slightly. As the number one expert of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture, despite not having gained any merits in battle after his son was being born, his reputation had only grown. This was because no one knew how powerful Ishwin had become...but no one could dispute that in even ten years, Ishwin had already become the number one expert of the West Prefecture.

His judgment was therefore exceptional.

“Fine.” Ishwin nodded.

“I’d like to hear your advice, Father.” Ning hurriedly said.

“No rush.” Ishwin shook his head. “I have some thoughts on the [Raindrop Sutra], but you’ve never trained it in before. Thus, even if I explained my thoughts to you, you wouldn’t be able to comprehend them. You have to first train hard, and even engage in life-and-death battles, before I can successfully guide you.”

“Tomorrow at dawn, I will give you the full copies of the [Raindrop Sutra] and the [Savage Thunderflame Sword]. At that time, you will perform them in front of me once. As long as you can get the postures and movements right, that will be enough.” Ishwin nodded. “Three days later, you will begin to engage in real battles. Those sparring matches you usually do are too simple and soft. You need to fight in real life-and-death battles.”

Ning was puzzled.

“Father, haven’t I already engaged in life-and-death battles?” Ning couldn’t help but ask. “In the past, when you acknowledged that my skill had reached the first level in sword training, the basic level, didn’t you have me fight against and kill some prisoners who had been sentenced to death?”

He still remembered the first time he had killed someone. At that time, his entire body had been trembling, uncontrollably so. Although he rationally knew that he shouldn’t be afraid, he still couldn’t help but shake. According to what his father had said...aside from a very few people who lived for slaughter, this was the normal reaction of most people the first time they killed someone.

After having killed dozens of people sentenced to death row, he had grown calmer.

“That wasn’t a battle. That was just training your courage.” Ishwin shook his head. “Fighting against convicts? All of them were weaker than you. How can that be called a life-and-death battle? Three days from now...I will arrange for you to engage in a true battle with monstrous beasts, powerful ones that have already reached mastery in the Houtian level.”

“Monsters?” Ning’s face changed.

“Those captured monsters will turn insane and ferocious for food and for the chance to live. In addition, they won’t show you any mercy at all.” Ishwin looked at his son. “In front of a massive cage, you will fight against the monstrous beasts, one on one. This is the battle which all important descendants of the Ji clan must go through; the ‘Cage Battle’. Over half of these important descendants will die in that cage.

Half?

Ning was briefly shocked, but then grew calm again. This was because he knew that the women and the slaves in the various tribes were highly fertile, but the total population here had never changed. Why? Because the savage environment had caused the tribes to need to struggle against the heavens, against the earth, against the Greater Monsters hidden within the mountains and valleys, and even against other tribes. Only a

few would be able to survive! Even though he was born into the Ji clan, he still needed to face tough, relentless training. Only the elite would survive.

It was precisely because all the clan members of the Ji clan were so strong that the Ji clan was famous and had become a local hegemon!

Chapter 15: Cage Battle

Three days later, at dawn, Ning and his father came to Dragon Castle.

Dragon Castle was three hundred meters wide, a thousand meters long, and was divided into two parts; the Cage, and the tunnels for the monstrous beasts. The Cage was where the life-and-death battles would be carried out, while the beast tunnels were where the monstrous beasts were imprisoned. Because Dragon Castle held many monstrous beasts inside, it was extremely dangerous, which is why it had been built outside of the city.

.....

Dragon Castle. Within the Cage.

Ning entered the Cage and looked around. This was an empty area that was two or three hundred meters in diameter. The four walls were all made from some sort of black metal, and up above him was black metallic chains that formed a metal web, preventing anyone from fleeing.

“This place is completely sealed.” Ishwin, who faintly emanated a cold aura, said, “The walls are formed with blackwater iron. Although blackwater iron isn’t a particularly precious material, most early stage Xiantian will find it very difficult to damage such a thick blackwater iron wall. As for the thick chains above, those are also made from blackwater iron. Given your strength...if you are to use the power within the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] and use your full strength, you should be able to break apart the chains. But a web like this formed from many chains...you will probably need the span of ten breaths before you are able to break enough chains to escape.”

Ning nodded.

“Look.” Ishwin pointed towards the air above the net of chains. There was a viewing platform beyond it.

“Your mother and I, as well as your Uncle White, will be there watching you.” Ishwin said coldly.

“Be careful.” Snow encouraged her son.

“Roar!” The snow white dog also looked at Ning, his eyes filled with encouragement and anticipation. This snow white dog was his father Ishwin’s lifelong friend, and was also his own Uncle White. In total, his father had tamed two Greater Monsters; one was that massive black python, the so-called Uncle Black! The other was a snow white dog, his Uncle White.

Beasts, upon gaining a level of intelligence, could begin to absorb natural energy and transform into monstrous beasts!

Monstrous beasts, after managing the difficult art of transformation, would enter the Xiantian level and become Xiantian lifeforms. Only then would they be considered Greater Monsters. Generally speaking, Greater Monsters were capable of transforming into humans, such as Uncle Black. But amongst monstrous beasts, there was a very unique type of creature: the Godbeasts.

Godbeasts were magical beasts that contained some of the bloodline of those ancient Fiendgods of the past. They were born intelligence, and possessed powerful natural gifts. Their strength was far greater than that of ordinary monstrous beasts. They also found it extremely hard to transform into human forms, and for different Godbeasts, the level of difficulty was different as well.

Some needed to reach the ‘Zifu’ level before they could take human form. Some needed to reach the ‘Wanxiang’ level. Some, even higher...

Uncle White was a Godbeast of the ‘Whitewater Hound’ type, and he had to reach the Zifu level before he could take human form and speak in the human tongue.

However, Ning and the Whitewater Hound were extremely close to each other, because after having been taught archery by his teacher, Blindfish, Ning would spend every morning with the Whitewater Hound at the forests outside the West Prefecture training in archery. Ishwin hadn’t been able to rest easy with his son going out by himself, which is why he asked the Xiantian lifeform, the ‘Whitewater Hound’, to help protect him.

The power of a Xiantian level Godbeast was terrifying indeed! Whitewater was one of the reasons why Ishwin had such a high position and reputation in the Ji clan of the Western Prefecture.

“Just watch.” Ning’s lips twisted into a smile.

“Growl.” Whitewater let out a growl as well, then followed Ishwin and Snow to the narrow walkway. Soon, they arrived at the viewing platform.

Ning let out a soft breath, calming himself down as he looked around him.

“Why do I feel like I’m in the Coliseum?” Ning secretly murmured. “There’s a place for battle, and there’s a viewing platform.” He knew that generally speaking, only the important disciples of the clan would be permitted to engage in battle against monstrous beasts here, which is why the elders and family members of the clan would often come watch.

“Hua....” “Hua...”

“Hua...”

The sound of chains clanking against each other could be heard from a distant tunnel. Ning couldn’t help but turn to look, and within that pitch black tunnel...he could faintly make out a low, angry growling sound, a sound which actually shook the entire cage. Even the massive chain net above the cage was quivering with the noise.

A massive, silver furred head slowly appeared from within the distant tunnel.

“What is that?” Ning looked carefully.

“Ning.” Ishwin said coldly from the viewing platform above the cage, “You train in the number one Fiendgod Body Refining, so I specially selected an extremely powerful monstrous beast for you, one with the lineage of the Fiendgods: A Howling Moonwolf.”

Ning’s eyes widened as he stared above at his father, a look of shock on his face.

A beast that possessed the lineage of the Fiendgods?

Then that would be a Godbeast, right? But it made sense; Godbeasts were a type of monstrous beast. In the vast world, there were still a good number of Houtian level Godbeasts that roamed about, such as the Armored Wurm, the Earthquake Rhino, the Howling Moonwolf, the Redclawed Goldenraven, the Thundersea Owl, or the Whitewater Hound. Generally speaking, out of every thousand Houtian level Godbeast, only one would be able to break through to the Xiantian lifeform level.

“Hua...” The metal clanking sound continued.

Ning didn't lose his focus. He stared at the giant tunnel in the wall. He knew that they were probably removing the chains on the other side. Once the chains were removed, the Howling Moonwolf would be released.

“Pengcheng!” The sound of metal chains hitting the floor.

“Hooooowl!” Instantly, a carefree wolf's howl rang out. In the air above, Ishwin, his wife, and the Whitewater Hound stared carefully down below.

Ning held his breath.

From the distant tunnel, a massive creature slowly made its way out. Its entire body was covered with beautiful silver fur. It was over two meters tall, and its steps were graceful. It stared at the tiny little pipsqueak standing in the distance; a human male. As one of the special types of monstrous beasts, a Godbeast, the creature's intelligence wasn't lower than that of humans.

It knew that there were only two possible outcomes after entering this cage. The first was to kill this human and continue to live. The other was to be killed by this human youth.

“He picked a Godbeast for me the first time here.” Ning stretched out his right hand, and a sword appeared in it out of nowhere, gleaming with cold light. “Then let's kill it.”

The Howling Moonwolf's massive body weighed nearly ten thousand pounds, but its four legs moved with great agility as it closed the distance. Its long, narrow eyes inspected this human youth.

Ning walked forward, one step at a time, with longsword in hand.

The distance between the two quickly drew near.

“Shua!” The Howling Moonwolf’s movements suddenly changed from being graceful to being savage, and it suddenly transformed into a blur as it pounced at Ning, and its previously soft paws suddenly had sharp claws emerge from it as well.

Sou!

At the critical moment, Ning suddenly moved, as graceful as the wind as he dodged the Howling Moonwolf’s pounce, and then stabbed out with the sharp sword in his hand! The stab was extremely forceful and straight, and it was also fast as lightning. If it managed to land on the Howling Moonwolf’s body, it would be able to borrow the charging force of the Moonwolf and tear its body open!

“Huh?” As he stabbed, Ning’s face suddenly changed. The sword tip had met with a powerful blocking force. The Howling Moonwolf’s fur had blocked the tip of the sword, preventing it from penetrating through.

At the same time, the Howling Moonwolf suddenly sent its tail whisking towards Ning. Unable to dodge in time, Ning quickly used his sword to block.

Peng!

The Moonwolf’s tail landed against the blade like a heavy iron whip, and the powerful force knocked Ning flying away, his body slamming against the distant blackwater iron wall with a boom. Peng! The thick wall trembled violently.

“Roar!” The Howling Moonwolf immediately followed up with another pounce as it slashed at Ning with its claws.

Ning quickly dodged with a flying leap.

Chi! Chi! Chi! Several deep claw marks appeared on the blackwater iron wall. The Moonwolf landed on the ground, then stared at the distant human youth. Its tail attack was its killing weapon. Its tail had sent the human youth slamming into the wall, but the human youth had actually been able to quickly dodge far away. It understood that this human youth

truly was very powerful, powerful enough to give him a good fight.

“An ordinary Ninefang Warrior, upon meeting with that tail, would probably have their organs split open.” Ning frowned as he stared at the Howling Moonwolf. “It seems I’ll have to rely on the power of the Fiendgod Body Refining.”

These years, he had also engaged in Ki Refining and had reached mastery of the Houtian level.

But his attacks with Houtian level Ki Refining techniques couldn’t even break through the fur. How could he use it to fight?

“Hrmph!”

Ning let out a deep growl, and from his nostrils came forth two streams of energy that were visible to the naked eye. The streams of energy were causing the air itself to shake. At that moment, the hidden, terrifying potential strength that was lying dormant in his body suddenly exploded forth, and the hidden Solar Strength and Lunar Strength exploded as well, and his entire body began to turn faintly red.

With a slight movement of the sword in his hands, Ning shattered the air before him and carved a huge ditch into the thick earth.

The distant Howling Moonwolf let out a low growl, staring fixedly at this youth.

....

“The child has finally begun to use the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens].” Snow laughed. “Before this, he was still trying to avoid doing so.”

Ishwin nodded. “The Howling Moonwolves have the lineage of the Fiendgods. Their fur is incomparably tough, and ordinary Houtian experts aren’t able to break through it. I chose this creature on purpose...to force Ning to use all of his strength, and see how much of it he can use in a real, life-and-death battle.”

“What do you think about the look on Ning’s face?” Yuchi Snow asked.

“Average.” Ji Ishwin stared down. “He’s fairly calm.”

....

Spinning the sword in his hand, Ning slowly walked towards the Howling Moonwolf, circling around it.

The Moonwolf stared at Ning as well, choosing not to rashly attack. This was because once it attacked...it would expose its own flaws as well. That would be the moment which determined life or death.

“Hrmph.” Not hesitating at all, Ning suddenly charged forward after the Moonwolf, his body becoming a blur.

With a howl, the Howling Moonwolf immediately pounced over as well, opening its massive maw and revealing its sharp fangs. Its sharp claws tore at Ning as well.

Shua!

A flash of the sword!

The shadow of a sword slashed through the air, striking in a short range while changing trajectories nine times. Its speed was terrifyingly fast, so fast that it was as though even the void was being chopped apart with it. Chi chi chi chi chi. The flashing sword chopped at the Moonwolf’s chest, carving out a massive wound, and fresh blood instantly spurted out.

“Block.” Just after Ning chopped out with one sword, he immediately turned his sword back and blocked the Howling Moonwolf’s claw, while simultaneously borrowing the clashing force to fly backwards and retreat.

The Howling Moonwolf stared furiously at Ning. The massive wound on its chest was shrinking, and the flow of blood began to slow, but it still continued to drip blood. Clearly, that wound had simply been too massive.

The Howling Moonwolf was now truly sensing the impending arrival of death!

“The [Savage Thunderflame Sword]’s technique, ‘Thunderflash Flint’, really is extraordinary. Ning sighed softly.

Chapter 16: Causing Devastation

After having received two consummate sword techniques, Ning had been training hard, of course. He was now capable of utilizing the techniques of the [Raindrop Sutra] and the [Savage Thunderflame Sword], and his power had increased. However, he had only learned a tiny bit, and he wasn't even at the level of expertise, much less mastery. After all, even his father, Ishwin, was still pondering on the secrets of the [Raindrop Sutra].

Thunderflash Flint was one of the three killer moves of the [Savage Thunderflame Sword]. It relied on a single word; fast!

As fast as lightning! As swift as flame!

"Ning's swordplay and his footwork are both exquisite." Snow said in praise from the viewing platform. "Although the Howling Moonwolf is as fast as a shadow, even faster than Ning, Ning has relied on the [Shadewind Steps] to constantly change directions. He's in complete control of this battle. His swordplay has reached the 'advanced' level, and he can quickly make multiple changes in his movements. In dealing with that monstrous wolf...it can be said that his defense is airtight."

Ishwin nodded. "With the Fiendgod Body Refining, Ning's great strength is his forte, while his speed is a bit weaker...but this is a Godbeast, after all. It has an extremely strong life force. A wound like this is just a skin wound to it. When it starts fighting all out, and with Ning never having experienced such a vicious life and death battle before, the results will be hard to predict."

....

Below, Ning had the feeling that everything was under control, and he continued to wield the sword in his hand as he drew near the Moonwolf.

"Awooooooo!"

Sensing the threat of death from this human youth, the Moonwolf gave a savage howl. All the fur on its body stood up straight as needles, and its

eyes turned hard, its pupils flashing. Those who were familiar with Moonwolves could tell...that this one had already entered a wild, bestial state.

A terrifying aura spread forth from it, causing Ning to pause.

A killing aura?

“Growl!” The Howling Moonwolf charged towards him, the earth shaking beneath it.

Ning dodged as agilely as the wind, changing directions with a simple step. At the same time, his sword flashed. Chi! Fresh blood sprayed out once more, and yet another enormous wound appeared on the Moonwolf’s chest, but this time, the Moonwolf didn’t care at all as it sent its two pairs of ferocious paws towards Ning, its knife-like claws slashing through the air.

Ning calmly retreated while at the same time, using his sword to block.

“Ka!”

The Moonwolf’s left paw slammed against the sharp sword, its paw seeming to have transformed into a hook which suddenly latched onto the sword. But how could Ning’s sword, infused with his Fiendgod Body Refining power, be so easily caught? If the two clashed and then immediately flew apart, it wouldn’t have been so bad, but the Moonwolf wanted to fight that power head on with his claws, and so it smashed it hard against the sword.

Ka!

The Moonwolf’s left paw clearly turned red with blood, and the faint sound of bones breaking could be heard.

Hua!

The other paw came at Ning’s chest. The distance was simply too close, and there was no chance to block. Ning’s only option was to take a deep breath, and his chest suddenly retracted in by three centimeters. Chi! Chi! Chi! The tough animal fur over Ning’s chest was ripped to tatters. Blood

spouted everywhere, and Ning was knocked flying as well, striking against the ground and making the earth itself crack from the impact.

Sou! Ning hurriedly pulled away.

“Injured.” Ning looked at the Moonwolf, his eyes narrowing.

Just then, the Moonwolf had actually chosen to use its paw to take his sword head on. The Howling Moonwolf didn’t care about what injuries upon itself were being inflicted, as it was going all out. Its left paw was now half useless, and its speed had dropped dramatically as well. But the paw blow it had landed on Ning had torn through Ning’s beast skin clothes. The beast skin clothes were part of the fur from a Xiantian lifeform. Without any monstrous power infused into it, the defense would be a bit weaker, but generally speaking the fur from a Xiantian lifeform would be able to block the attacks of a Houtian monster.

However, the Howling Moonwolf was a Godbeast. Its full strength attack was able to rip the fur apart.

In order to further train himself...although Ning had the protection of the Goldstar Shirt and could use it to guard his entire body, Ning had shrank its defensive radius to only protect his most vulnerable areas.

“A life-and-death battle is different from a spar. I can’t just use the experience I gained while sparring.” Ning quickly changed his calculations. “When sparring, nobody will engage in self-destructive behavior, but in a life-and-death battle...the goal is to kill the opponent. For the sake of this goal, any price is worth paying.”

“I need to be more careful and more cautious.”

Ning was like a sponge, quickly absorbing the learned experience. The fierce scar over his chest was visibly shrinking. The blood from it began to stop, and soon, it totally closed over, leaving behind a red line which then turned into white, clear skin. No lasting damage at all!

This was the powerful regenerative power provided by Fiendgod Body Refining.

Ordinary Fiendgod Body Refining techniques only required a person to

reach the Xiantian level before being able to regrow severed limbs. But Ning trained in the number one Fiendgod Body Refining, and his healing abilities were nearly on par with that sort of regeneration already.

“Excellent!” Ning cracked his lips into a smile. “It actually took my sword away.”

“Roaaaar.” The sword was stuck right beneath the Howling Moonwolf’s paw. It stared at Ning, its eyes filled with boundless bloodlust. The terrifying recuperative abilities of the human youth in front of it...it understood that this was a Fiendgod in human skin, with even greater healing abilities than Godbeasts.

Ning waved his right hand, and yet another sharp sword appeared within it.

“Come again.”

Ning transformed into a shadow as he pounced towards the Moonwolf.

“Roaaar!” The Howling Moonwolf charged forward as well.

.....

The two engaged each other time and time again, each time exchanging blows that nearly took the other’s life. Ning possessed powerful healing abilities and terrifying power, and a fierce sword attack style! But the Howling Moonwolf had its fangs, sharp claws, and tail, all of which it could use as weapons. In addition, its massive body was so large that most weapon wounds were of minimal threat to it.

“So he’s only using the Goldstar Shirt to protect his vital points.” A rare smile appeared on Ishwin’s face.

“Ning really is trying very hard.” Snow was growing nervous as she watched.

Her son’s body was covered in bloodstains. As his mother, how could she not worry?

“Don’t worry. Ning has still covered his body’s vital points with the Goldstar Shirt. Even if he is wounded, it won’t be life-threatening.” Ishwin

said. "At most, he might lose an arm or a leg...but given his regenerative abilities, with a little bit of time, he'll grow another one."

"Lose an arm or a leg?" Snow couldn't help but grow frantic, but she knew how difficult the road to becoming an expert had to be.

....

"Hu!" "Hu!" "Hu!" Although Ning had the body of a Fiendgod, right now, he couldn't help but pant for breath. The fur clothes on his body was already ripped apart in many areas, and the wound on his body was rapidly closing.

"Roaaaar."

The Moonwolf let out a despairing growl. It was forcing itself to stand erect, but its two paws were both quivering, as though it could collapse at any time. Its body was covered with dozens of giant wounds, and a particularly vicious pierce-wound was in its head.

Both of its legs had been shattered. It was already quite an impressive feat for it to be able to remain standing.

"You lose." Ning wiped the blood from the corner of his eyes, then said in a quiet voice, "My power is actually greater than yours, but my victory was quite a difficult one...the reason is because when faced with your bloodlust and your wildness, I was unable to be calm and bring out my full power. You are the first monster that I have ever killed, and thus, I will let you die under my greatest attack!"

Hua! A second sword appeared out of nowhere in Ning's left hand. Holding the twin swords, he stared at the Moonwolf.

Sou!

Ning suddenly transformed into a blur as he threw himself at the Moonwolf. The Howling Moonwolf let out a final howl as it threw itself at Ning as well.

Two massive flashes of light suddenly appeared, destroying one of the Moonwolf's remaining good legs, and then, with another flash, a massive

criss-cross wound appeared on the Howling Moonwolf's head, sending blood and brain matter flying everywhere.

Ning landed on the ground.

The Howling Moonwolf collapsed on the ground, brain matter tumbling out of the massive wound on its head. Its fur was stained with the color of the earth, and its formerly beautiful silver fur had become a stained combination of mud and blood, unsightly to the extreme. A descendant of the Fiendgods of the wolf lineage had died!

"How do you feel?" Ishwin looked down at his son.

"I feel great." Ning looked up at his father, his eyes filled with ardor. "Let's do this once a day."

Ishwin's eyelids twitched. He muttered, "Do you think capturing a peak Houtian level Godbeast is easy? Once every three days. And, most will be ordinary monstrous beasts. If you want to Godbeast, it'll be a matter of luck. I'll arrange for the most powerful monstrous beasts here in Dragon Castle to be reserved for your training."

Ning nodded. "If I meet some weaker monstrous beasts, I'll just rely on my internal force only."

Given the power of a Fiendgod's body, your ordinary peak Houtian monstrous beasts would be brutalized by brute force alone. This was why only Godbeasts with Fiendgod heritage in their blood could fight against Ning.

....

Time passed by.

Ning fought with one monstrous beast after another, and his sword technique and footwork grew more exquisite. At the same time, he learned how to better maintain his calm in life-and-death battles. If his heart was not calm...then his power wouldn't be able to be displayed to perfection.

....

Autumn had come. Swallow Mountain had become incomparably cold,

and some weak tribes had their lives become even more difficult. Especially when they were met with the savage attacks of some monsters from deep in the mountains...some smaller tribes might be exterminated!

Honghonghong....

The earth was shaking.

Atop this barren, desolate wasteland, a large group of black armored riders were riding their long-furred beasts. They seemed like a black flood which was charging across these plains.

“Halt.” A cold command. Three hundred powerful black armored riders instantly came to a halt.

“Commander, this place is the location where that serpent monster appeared last. This is the territory of the Sharphorn Tribe. Three days ago, the monster suddenly charged at the Sharphorn Tribe and devoured eighteen people, then killed over a hundred. The Sharphorn Tribe was totally destroyed.” A black armored rider said respectfully. “This creature has been an impending disaster for months. It has killed over a thousand people and devastated over ten tribes. However, all of those tribes were small ones. Logically speaking, it should be a peak-stage Houtian level monster with the lineage of the Fiendgods, or perhaps a Greater Monster who has newly reached the Xiantian level.”

“Hrm.”

The bearded man who was riding a white tiger and wore red, fiery scale mail armor nodded. “This serpent monster has been causing wanton devastation within the area controlled by our Ji clan of the Western Prefecture. It deserves death. It has only appeared in this area...all of you, divide into thirty small units and begin searching. Once you find it, immediately fire the signal arrow.”

“Yes.” The three hundred black armored riders acknowledged in unison.

Hua...

Soon, the three hundred mighty black armored riders divided into thirty small units which went searching in various directions.

Chapter 17: Buying a Weapon

Two days later.

Within a forest with thick foliage, a large number of black armored riders were surrounding a serpent monster.

“Roar...” This was a massive, blood-red serpent which glowed with silver light around its torso. Around its torso, it had two pairs of sinuous claws with four toes, and a pair of terrifying red serpentine eyes. However, right now, the giant snake had been totally covered by a giant net. No matter how much it struggled, it couldn’t break loose.

“Hahaha.” The bearded man in red armor laughed loudly. “Stupid snake. You were caught alive by us so easily. You, go tie it up.”

“Yes.”

Instantly, several dozen black armored knights cast one black chain after another, sending them flying towards the giant snake, quickly binding it up. The red serpent was tied up so securely that no matter how it contorted itself, it wasn’t able to do anything. Soon, it had been completely wrapped up by metal chains and bound so securely it couldn’t even open its mouth.

“Commander, where does this giant snake come from? Why does it have two claws?” A nearby black armored rider was curious. No matter how long he had been pondering, he couldn’t discern what type of Godbeast this was.

The bearded man laughed. “Serpent-type creatures are often intermingled in blood. I myself have seen over a hundred serpents with Fiendgod blood. Only, some bloodlines are very pure and therefore become famous and are named. A sort of mongrel mutant Godbeast like this has no name at all.”

“The young master needs some powerful Houtian level monstrous beasts to practice his sword on. This serpent monster would be a good choice.” The bearded man weighed the snake with his gaze, then nodded in

satisfaction. "Take it back."

"Yes."

The black armored riders acknowledged respectfully.

The commander of this regiment was a Xiantian-level lifeform belonging to the Ji clan of the Western Prefecture – the number one expert archer, Blindfish! Blindfish was still one of young master Ning's instructors, and without question in the Ji clan, he stood on the side of Ji Young and Ji Ishwin. In addition, Blindfish was quite proud of having taught Ning.

The story of how young master Ning would use monstrous beasts to train his swordplay had spread quite some time ago.

After all, for him to kill one every three days resulted in a large number of monstrous beasts being killed. These beasts were almost all brought back by the black armored riders, and so the news had quickly spread amongst the army.

"Young master Ning reached the peak of the Houtian stage long ago, and his swordplay is at the advanced level of 'one with the sword'. In addition, he is training in the most powerful sword technique of our Ji clan. Killing a peak Houtian monster should be a simple thing."

"Supposedly, he's even killed a Houtian level Godbeast."

"Think about who young master Ning is. He definitely has an extremely sharp, unblockable precious weapon. With a weapon like this, relying on his 'advanced' level sword techniques...killing a peak Houtian level Godbeast isn't too hard."

The legends that were circulating amongst the soldiers of the West Prefecture were quite vivid and fanciful.

Even the other powerful member of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture, Ji Lee, believed that the little fellow Ning was only able to kill a Godbeast because he had some sort of precious weapon.

Dragon Castle. The cage.

A powerfully built monstrous beast with black spots was lying on the

ground. The thick fur on his body had been split open in many places, and blood from those massive wounds stained the ground.

Ning was still standing there, frowning as he was thinking. The sharp sword in his hand disappeared into thin air. When fighting with most peak Houtian monsters, he only used his internal energy, and the weapons he used were only fairly decent weapons which couldn't be described as 'precious'. After all, he was already so physically strong that using a precious weapon on top of that would make the training pointless.

"Ji Ning!" A voice from above.

Ning couldn't help but look up at his father, Ishwin, who was on the viewing platform. This made Ning quite surprised. "Father, why have you come?"

Because he fought every three days here in the Dragon Castle, aside from that first fight with the Howling Moonwolf, the subsequent dozens of battles, his father had not attended...

"I wanted to see how your swordplay was progressing." Ishwin said. "Have you reached 'initiation' yet?"

"Not yet." Ning shook his head. "I haven't gained expertise in any of the many attacks contained within the [Raindrop Sutra] or the [Savage Thunderflame Sword]."

The [Raindrop Sutra] had a total of nine attack techniques.

The [Savage Thunderflame Sword] had a total of three attack techniques.

These attack techniques were all very special...if one could train in them to a high level, one would feel as though one had become 'one with the world' and be able to use the power of the world itself. This was what was known as 'initiation'. But this didn't actually symbolize that a person had reached the third level of swordplay, 'one with the world', because the true 'one with the world' level of swordplay was when one could use any sword attack, be it as something as simple as a stab, a chop, or a scrape, and utilize the power of the world itself with the attack. Only then would one

be at the 'one with the world' level!

Initiation only meant that one could temporarily reach the 'one with the world' effect when using certain techniques.

According to what his father had said...

Upon reaching 'initiation', one would have reached a certain level of expertise in a technique.

When one reached the 'one with the world' level, that means one had mastered a technique.

According to legends...

There was an even higher, more profound level above the 'one with the world' level. The [Raindrop Sutra] and the [Savage Thunderflame Sword] techniques were developed by people who were beyond the 'one with the world' level.

"There is no need for you to be so continuously hard working while training in the sword." Ishwin said. "Today, take Spring Grass and Autumn Leaf and go for a stroll."

Ning nodded. "Yes, father."

Ning turned his head and left through that narrow tunnel. As for the corpse of the dead monstrous beast, someone would come collect it later.

.....

West Prefecture City had hundreds of thousands of citizens. It was a large city.

"Young master, it's been so long since we've gone for a stroll." Spring Grass and Autumn Leaf, his two female servants, were clearly very happy as they followed by his side.

Ning smiled as he walked on the streets. This was one of the most bustling streets in the entire West Prefecture City. Generally speaking, all the merchants would pass by this street. The street was normally ten meters wide, but there were so many merchant stalls on each side that nearly half the space was taken up, causing there to only be seven meters

of walking space left.

“Look at this woman. Look at her ample chest, her large buttocks. She can definitely birth many babies. Ten lambskins for her!”

“These men are all fine warriors. They can all lift over a thousand pounds. Just five ingots of gold. If you buy one, we’ll throw in a kid as well.”

A bald man dressed in beast furs was shouting at the top of his lungs. He had several dozen fur-clad warriors standing guard around him, while he also had many slaves dressed in dirty, tattered fur pelts. All of them stared pitifully around them, hoping that they would meet a kind master who would buy them. There were signs on their heads.

These signs signified that they were for sale.

....

They strolled and looked around.

There were slave traders, beast fur traders, weapon traders, beast traders, monstrous beast traders...all sorts of people were here. There were even some precious books, precious weapons, poisons and herbs, secret technique manuals, and other things for sale.

“Over a hundred warriors in our tribe died for us to acquire this precious weapon, and then we had to make our way back through the wilderness and encounter countless difficulties before we arrived at the West Prefecture City. We weren’t even willing to sell it for thirty beastheads of gold, but you want to try and buy it for ten? That’s too little. At least a hundred beastheads of gold!” A rough-voiced man was shouting from nearby.

Ning glanced over in curiosity.

He saw around dozens of people in a circle surrounding three strong men wearing pitch-black furs, one of whom had a black snake coiled around his arm. The man continued: “A hundred beastheads of gold, whoever pays a hundred beastheads can take it away!”

“How greedy.”

“He actually dares to demand a hundred beastheads of gold.” Spring Grass and Autumn Leaf both murmured.

Ning was surprised as well. A beasthead of gold was around ten pounds. A hundred beastheads meant a thousand pounds of gold. Although to the young master of the Ji clan, it was nothing, to an ordinary tribesman, it was a vast fortune.”

“No matter how sharp it is, it’s just a weapon.”

“It isn’t as though it is some perfect magic treasure. It’s just a damaged magic treasure that can be used as a weapon.”

“Twenty beastheads. I’ll pay twenty beastheads at most. You want to sell, and I want to buy!”

Someone made an offer.

“A hundred beastheads.” The man didn’t budge at all. The two men by his side watched the crowd carefully, afraid that someone might try to seize their treasure. For the sake of this treasure, many people in their tribe had died, and as they made their way from the tribe to the city through the desolate wilderness, dozens more warriors had died. They had to sell this treasure for a high price.

After selling it, they would be able to buy some slaves and some good weapons, so as to allow the tribe to increase its power.

“Let me take a look.” Ning saw the precious weapon which the man was clutching and immediately stepped forward.

The people nearby all turned to look at him.

“Young master.”

“Young master.”

“This is the young master of the Ji clan? The son of the Raindrop Sword?”

Many people stepped back modestly. Anyone capable of paying such a

high price was an extraordinary person. In addition, in the past few years, Ning had gone every day with the Whitewater Hound outside the city to train in archery. Each time they left the city, many people saw and recognized him as the exalted young master of the Ji clan. The other people who didn't recognize him, upon hearing others discuss him, were made aware as well.

When the man with the black snake saw everyone else step back, then heard the words 'young master of the Ji clan' and 'son of the Raindrop Sword', he was instantly so frightened that his heart began to shake. As people who lived on the territory of the Ji clan, they all knew the legendary Raindrop Sword. This was the number one expert in the entire area around the Ji clan's West Prefecture, a godlike presence.

And the person in front of him was the only child of the Raindrop Sword?

"Let me take a look." Ning said.

"Honored young master, please look." The man respectfully offered the sword in both hands. The two men behind him both felt extremely nervous. They were afraid that this young master who had an extremely high and exalted status would simply take their treasure by force. In the tribes, for a powerful person or person with high status to seize treasures by force was quite common. Although it was forbidden in the West Prefecture City and nobody dared to challenge the laws of the Ji clan, the young man in front of them was a young master of the Ji clan, the only son of the Raindrop Sword!

Ning accepted the sword, and his hands sank down slightly from the weight. This was a pitch-black sword. The thick black sheath seemed very plain and unadorned, but if one looked at it closely, one would find that this scabbard actually had three swords sheathed within it.

"One scabbard, three swords?" Surprised, Ning pulled out the swords.

Clang!

While pulling out the three swords, a cold light flashed on the surface of the swords, and ancient, shattered runes glowed dimly.

“What a pity.” Ning shook his head and sighed. He had seen many treasures in the prefecture. Seeing those mysterious runes and the power they emanated, he knew that this was previously a magic treasure. It should have been three flying swords which were controlled by a Immortal practitioner. But these runes were all but destroyed. Clearly, this magic treasure was badly damaged. It could only be used as a weapon now.”

“Chi.” Ning tested his finger against the blade of the sword.

“Careful. It is very sharp.” The man with the serpent called out in alarm. This precious weapon could cut through stones like tofu.”

Ning felt the skin of his fingertips shake slightly. He couldn't help but feel surprise. “I have the Goldstar Shirt protecting my body, which is currently spread to every inch of my skin. Just then, when I casually sliced my finger...it actually impacted the Goldstar Shirt. If I were to swing the sword down hard, it probably would have broken through the Goldstar Shirt's defense. I walk through the city streets every day on my way to archery training and have seen countless weapons, but I've never seen such a sharp, precious weapon.”

Others only sensed that this weapon was very sharp, but they didn't know exactly how sharp it was. But Ning had the feeling...that even his Goldstar Shirt would find it hard to block this precious weapon.

“I want this weapon.” Ning looked at the man with the snake.

The man was both excited and nervous. He hurriedly said, “Young master, for the sake of this weapon, our tribe...” In front of this young man of exalted status, he was nervous and didn't dare to demand a certain price.

Chapter 18: Wings

“Mm.” With a flip of his hand, a piece of blue-tinged gold appeared in Ning’s palm. He tossed it directly towards the man with the black serpent. “Take it.”

“Just this little tiny piece of gold?” The man with the black serpent and the two behind him were frantic. They stared at that tiny bit of blue-tinged gold, just the size of a finger. “And it isn’t even pure?”

“Young master.”

“Respected young master.”

The three men began to call out and beg. How could they possibly return to the tribes with this? The other tribal warriors were outside the city waiting. None of them were willing to enter the city...because the cost of entering the city was a lambskin or some other equivalent value item.

“You pack of idiots. That is thundergold!”

“I’m willing to pay a hundred beastheads of gold for that piece of thundergold.”

“Just a hundred beastheads? A piece of thundergold of that size, I’d pay 160 beastheads! I can send someone to bring the beastheads of gold right now!” Instantly, the nearby people began to make offers. All of them were people of some status in the West Prefecture City, or came from the clans with Xiantian lifeforms in them, or perhaps belonged to the powerful tribes that were located close to the West Prefecture. How excellent their judgment must therefore be!

The man with the black snake hurriedly clutched the piece of thundergold. He clearly felt that the weight of this item was far beyond that of normal yellow gold. He exchanged glances with his two friends, both shocked and overjoyed.

“Thank you, young master.”

“Thank you, mighty young master.”

The three men instantly thanked him, filled with gratitude.

“Now you thank him? The Raindrop Sword is a major figure whose fame is known everywhere. Think about what sort of status his son has. How could he possibly take your weapon by force? Just the tiniest portion of his fortune that he could casually toss out would astonish you.” A fat, fur-clad old man next to them said in a loud voice. Clearly, these words were intentionally said for the not too distant Ning to hear.

Ning chuckled, and then casually made the sheath with the three swords disappear into his kalestone. Because the space inside the kalestone was limited, thus Ning only carried a few beastheads of gold with him. Everything else he had was all precious treasures.

.....

Within the hall.

Ji Ishwin was seated at the master's seat, while Yuchi Snow sat on his left. The two were slowly eating the food on the table in front of them.

Sou!

A human figure rushed in. It was Ning, who had finished his stroll.

“Father, mother.” Ning said hurriedly.

Ishwin frowned. “Why didn't you pay attention to the time when you were taking a stroll outside?”

Ning obediently didn't dare to make a sound, hurriedly running to his usual spot, sitting on his knees and beginning to eat. Their lunch was rather sumptuous, with all sorts of meats, bread, and wine on the table. Ning's current appetite was simply voracious, and virtually all of the food and beverages on the table were devoured by Ning in a short period of time.

Snow laughed as she watched her son tear through the food like a tornado.

“Father, mother.” Ning suddenly thought of the sheath and three swords he had purchased today. He hurriedly said, “Today, while taking the walk, I

ran into three tribal warriors. They should have come from a distant, impoverished place to the Western Prefecture City. They came for the purpose of selling a precious weapon. And I...decided to buy it.”

“Precious weapon?” The seated Ishwin frowned. “In the treasure warehouse of our Ji clan here in the West Prefecture, we have plenty of precious weapons. In the past, didn’t you already select two precious weapons? How can those lowly peddlers in the city possibly have anything good.”

Because Ning had yet to reach the Xiantian level in Ki Refining, he naturally couldn’t control any magic treasures yet, which is why he went to the treasure warehouse to pick out two precious swords. But of course, when training in the cage, he only used ordinary weapons.

“Father, the two precious weapons I selected in the warehouse are far inferior to this one I just bought.” Ning said seriously.

“Oh?” Ishwin looked at his son.

“Actually, the precious weapon I bought is a damaged sword-type magic treasure.” Ning explained. “There are occult runes carved onto it, but they are totally damaged. Therefore, it can only be used as a fairly sharp precious weapon. However, it really is sharp, far more so than the previous precious weapons in my residence. If I use some force, I can pierce through the Goldstar Shirt.”

“Pierce through the Goldstar Shirt?” Ishwin revealed a hint of surprise. “Let me take a look.”

Ning stretched his hand out, and that simple, unadorned sheath and three swords appeared within it. Standing up, he walked it over to his father.

Ishwin accepted it and took a close look at the sheath, then pulled out the three swords. “The magic runes on the swords are totally destroyed, but it feels as though...this is indeed a flying sword magic treasure! Unfortunately, it’s a damaged magic treasure. Most damaged magic treasures aren’t worth much. At most, they might be sold to be broken down into some other materials.”

Ning nodded.

He had read many books, and knew that damaged magic treasures were not worth much, because the material components of magic treasures had already undergone various fusing techniques, making it so that even if one broke down the magic treasure, one wouldn't be able to get many of the original components back.

"Chi!" Ishwin stroked the tip of the sword with his finger, and a hint of blood appeared on his fingertip. A look of shock appeared on his face. "What a sharp sword. Without any energy infused into it, the sword is still so incredibly sharp. I've never seen such a thing. Snow, come take a look. Can you tell where it comes from?"

Yuchi Snow accepted it and carefully looked it over, then slowly shook her head after a long time. "I can't tell."

"Mother, if this magic flying sword treasure wasn't damaged, would it be a 'ranked' treasure?" Ning hurriedly asked.

"Of course it would be a 'ranked' treasure." Snow nodded. "Even though it is damaged, the sharpness of this sword is still on par with some 'unranked' magic treasures. When it was undamaged...of course it was a 'ranked' treasure. Only, exactly what rank it was at, I can't tell at all. Perhaps no one in the entire area around Swallow Mountain can tell."

Ning nodded. He understood this.

Generally speaking, the magic treasures owned by a Xiantian level Ki Refiner was 'unranked'. Only Zifu Disciples and above would have 'ranked' magic treasures. Forging magic treasures...that was even harder. There was nobody in the entire Swallow Mountain area who was known to be able to forge magic treasures. Perhaps only in those distant, incomparably powerful tribes would there be an expert capable of forging magic treasures.

"The Darcian Dynasty has persisted from the Fiendgod Era until now." Ishwin returned the sheath and the three swords to his son. "It rules over countless territories, with a history of trillions of years. Who knows how many tribes have risen, fallen, or been exterminated, and how many

treasures they have left behind. It isn't rare to see some magic treasures left over from wars, and our Ji clan has hundreds of damaged magic treasures as well, most of which are of unknown origin. But for this damaged magic treasure to still be so incredibly sharp is quite rare. It is very suited for your use."

Snow then added, "Ning, in the future, when you reach the Xiantian level as a Ki Refiner and infuse your life energy into an 'unranked' magic treasure...its power still might be inferior to these swords!"

Ning nodded.

Magic treasures could be unfathomably profound.

Generally speaking, when Ki Refiners used magic treasures, they were capable of thousands of bizarre powers. But for Fiendgod Body Refiners... they still specialized in close combat. They had a virtually indestructible body, great strength, speed, and regenerative abilities, which is why even when using magic treasures, Fiendgod Body Refiners would generally use weapons such as swords, daggers, spears, and what not.

"This sheath and its three sword will still be useful to me, even after I become a Xiantian lifeform." Ning felt delighted. He pondered, "Since it will most likely be with me for a long time, I need to give it a name...Hrm. I'll call it the 'Darknorth Sword!'"

There was a reason why Ning had suddenly thought of 'Darknorth'.

In the past, when his father, Ji Ishwin, had left Swallow Mountain and roamed in the boundless wide world, he had even gone to the north, to the unending ocean. That massive sea was named as the 'Dark North Sea'. Within the Dark North Sea, there were many islands. Ji Ishwin had floated from one island to another, and that's where he had met Yuchi Snow.

They became travel companions, and then after experiencing life and death battles, fell in love with each other, then Snow became pregnant.

Because of the pregnancy...they finally left the dangerous Dark North Sea and returned to Swallow Mountain. Mid-journey, however, they had run into a dangerous situation and Yuchi Snow had suffered a serious

wound. This is why they had said that 'Ning suffered an injury in the womb'. At that critical time, the Godbeast, 'Whitewater Hound', had carried Snow on his back and fled.

This was why Ishwin often said that Uncle White had once saved Ning.

His parents had met, fell in love, then conceived him in the Dark North Sea.

The phrase, 'Darknorth', thus had a special meaning to Ning.

"Father. Mother." Ning said seriously. "I have given a name to this sheath and its three swords. Its name will be the Darknorth Sword!"

.....

At the same time Ning acquired the Darknorth Sword. In an area within Swallow Mountain known as Serpentwing Lake....

Serpentwing Lake was a massive lake, nearly a hundred kilometers long, so large that one wouldn't be able to see the end of it.

As the saying goes, deep mountains and massive lakes always have monsters within.

These words were not false! This massive, mysterious lake, without question, has Greater Monsters within it, and countless numbers of lesser monsters. The name of the Greater Monster within this lake was Serpentwing. It was an ancient monster, over a thousand years old, and possessed outlandishly strong power. It was born capable of flight, and it could control both water and poison. It was a very ferocious, awe-inspiring Greater Monster.

Deep in the center of the lake, there was a small island. This was the lair of Serpentwing.

"Hong..." A giant black coiled serpent, hundreds of meters long. Its two massive scaled wings were spread so wide, it seemed to encompass the skies. Its scarlet eyes were focused on a group of quivering monstrous beasts. A cold aura surrounded the place, and a layer of frost was on the ground.

The densely clustered lesser monsters were all on their knees or on their faces, all of them quivering.

Over a hundred monstrous beasts lay fallen on the ground, their bodies covered with frost. They had been frozen solid.

“Hong...” The furious Serpentwing let out an enraged roar.

Those lesser monsters consisted of all sorts of serpent, crab, and fish-type monsters. They all growled softly in reply. Clearly, they were all incomparably terrified.

“ROAR!” Serpentwing snarled coldly.

Huahuahua....

All the monsters retreated at high speed, as though relieved of a heavy burden. Many of the monsters left the island and entered the depths of the lake, while a portion of them took up defensive positions in various places around the island.

“Shua.” The giant black snake suddenly transformed into mist, and then it reformed into a black-clothed man.

“I, Serpentwing, had ninety two sons!” The black-clothed man ground his teeth. “While they grew up, the majority died, and only sixteen survived! And only one of them has the lineage of the Fiendgods...my most beloved son, Redtip!”

Snakes were lascivious by nature.

Although he himself did not have the lineage of the Fiendgods, he had copulated with many Houtian monsters, some of whom included Houtian stage Godbeasts. To an ancient monster who had trained for over a thousand years...it was fairly easy for him to meet and engage with some Houtian level Godbeasts. But Godbeasts rarely got pregnant, and thus only a single one of his children had the lineage of the Fiendgods. That one was Redtip.

His most beloved child. He was certain that so long as Redtip could become a Xiantian lifeform, he would definitely possess enormous power

and limitless prospects.

“Redtip, I told you long ago not to go out before reaching the Xiantian level. Although humans are delicious, if you eat too many of them, the Ji clan would come and deal with you.” The black-robed man growled, filled with misery.

His pride and his joy, his son Redtip, had snuck out and discovered that the taste of human flesh was far better than that of other monstrous beasts. Human flesh truly was delicious.

And thus, Redtip had gone behind his father’s back and snuck out time and time again to engage in slaughter.

“My child. I have to bring you back.” The black-clothed man instantly transformed back into the enormous winged serpent form. His massive body floated into the air, and then he transformed into a black shadow, streaking across the sky and disappearing into the clouds.

Credits

Translator: [lewatermelons](#)

Epub: [Estevam](#) / [dotNOVEL](#)